The Guardian



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Warlord launches 'bloody massacre'

Julian Borger and Ian Traynor

SERBIAN paramilitaries led by a notorious Belgrade gangster were believed to be carrying out a final, bloody cull of Muslim men in northern Bosnia as a ceasefire that could end 42 months of war in Bosnia was delayed.

The ceasefire, set for one minute past midnight on Tuesday, was postponed because Russian gas supplies by pipeline to Sarajevo had apparently not been resumed. But late on Monday, Moscow told Washington it had turned on the supply.

Even as the West prepared to applaud the American-brokered halt to hostilities, thousands of Muslim and Croat women, children and elderly were being rounded up and expelled from the region. Relief workers said hundreds of Muslim men appear to have disappeared into detention camps in the area.

The women and children arriving in government-held areas were described by a Red Cross worker as "deeply traumatised". "Some of them are unable to put a coherent sentence together," he said.

All the signs were that the paramilitaries — led by Arkan, a Belgrade-based ex-bank robber and warlord suspected of atrocities in Croatia and Bosnia — were conducting a brutal settling of scores with the Bosnian Muslims before the truce takes hold, paving the way for a peace settlement. Arkan is thought to be controlled by Serbia's president, Slobodan Milosevic, and works for the Yugoslav army.

Refugees expelled from the area in recent days said their husbands, fathers and sons were separated by hooded or uniformed Serbs they described as Arkan's paramilitaries. No one has seen the men since.

The refugees believed the men had been taken to detention camps around Sanski Most and Prijedor — an area the Serbs used as a killing field for Muslims in 1992. The International War Crimes Commission for former Yugoslavia, whose tribunal heard evidence from its first witness this week, described the Serb campaign in the Prijedor area in 1992 as genocide.

Over recent days 3,500 women, children and elderly Muslims have arrived, exhausted and terrified, in central Bosnia, after being bused from their homes in the Serb-held towns of Bosanski Novi, Prijedor, and Sanski Most. They were made to cross the front line at the Velika Usora river. "They say they were made to walk along a thin ledge above the river, and some of them seem to have fallen in and drowned," an aid official said.

Nato bombers returned to action on Monday, attacking a Bosnian Serb command post near the government-held town of Tuzla, after a Norwegian peacekeeper was killed by a Serb shell near the city.

Zeljko "Arkan" Razujatovic arrived in western Bosnia last month with his "Tigers" militia, ostensibly to shore up Bosnian Serb defences. But his men have focused on victimising the 25,000 Muslims left in northern Bosnia.

When the Serbs overran the east Bosnian Muslim enclave of Srebrenica in July, men were separated from their families and taken away. Up to 8,000 men from Srebrenica are still unaccounted for.

Martin Woollacott, page 12



AN AMTRAK train lies on its side in a dry creek bed after it was derailed on Monday, 50 miles southwest of Phoenix, Arizona. One person was killed and about 100 injured. Sabotage by extremists similar to those charged with the Oklahoma City bombing was suspected. A note at the scene, signed by a group calling itself Sons of the Gestapo, said the attack was carried out in the name of the shootouts at Waco, Texas, in 1993, and at Ruby Ridge, Idaho, in 1992 — events cited by militia extremists as classic abuses of state power.

PHOTOGRAPH SCOTT TROYANOS

Tory MP defects to Labour

Michael White

JOHN MAJOR this week threw his personal prestige into a concerted cabinet attempt to prevent former minister Alan Howarth's dramatic weekend defection to Labour from turning the Conservative party conference at Blackpool into a divisive debacle.

Mr Howarth, MP for the safe seat of Stratford-upon-Avon, turned the spotlight on what he called "indecent" pressure for tax cuts at a time when teachers are being sacked and welfare benefits squeezed, but ministers made plain their determination to press ahead with an agenda that seeks to highlight law and order, social security fraud and lower marginal rates of income tax.

A surge of outrage, which mirrored Mr Howarth's evident despair over the Government's loss of "decency and fairness", swept through the Tory ranks and prompted calls for the MP to resign his seat. He made it plain he will not.

In a speech he had prepared for a Guardian-sponsored debate with John Redwood on the Blackpool conference fringe, Mr Howarth renewed his critique of what his resignation letter called "the arrogance of power" and the damaging harshness of government policy.

After the spate of byelection defeats, unbroken since 1988, the defection of the first Tory to cross the floor directly to Labour effectively cut the Government's overall Commons majority from 7 to 5, hastening the prospect that Mr Major will have to call an early election.

James Lewis, page 8
Comment, page 12

British aid cut threatens world's poorest

Ian Black

FAMILY planning in Uganda and Pakistan, primary education in Bangladesh and reproductive health in Kenya will be among projects sacrificed if the UK government goes ahead with proposed 12 per cent cuts in the overseas aid budget.

Overseas Development Administration documents demonstrate what charities warn will be a devastating effect on British aid to some of the poorest countries. The proposed cut in the ODA's £2.2 billion budget was leaked last month. Threatened projects include a £1.9 million literacy project in Nepal, and earthquake rehabilitation in India.

A full-page advert paid for by the big aid agencies in the Times on Tuesday asks the Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, what he would choose to cut to save the £275 million being sought: a lifetime's supply of clean water for 27 million people in Africa, primary education for 6.7 million children in India, or 375,000 vital feeding programmes for starving children in Sudan.

Mike Aaronson, director general of Save the Children, said: "A cut of this size would thoroughly undermine the very purpose which most people think aid should serve — helping the one-quarter of the world's population who live in poverty to get access to the basics of life."

Britain has pledged to commit 0.7 per cent of GNP to overseas aid, but the current figure is running at 0.31 per cent. Many EU countries pay more. Because so much of British aid is locked into multilateral bodies such as the European Union and the World Bank, the cuts would have to come from bilateral development aid, which is poverty-focused and would be disproportionately reduced by about 40 per cent from 1996-98.

UK backs debt plan, page 13

Austria	AS30	Malta	45c
Belgium	BF75	Netherlands	G 4.40
Denmark	DK16	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 9.50	Portugal	E300
France	FF 13	Spain	P 275
Germany	DM 3.60	Sweden	SK 17
Greece	DR 400	Switzerland	SF 3.30
Italy	L 3,000	Thailand	60 Baht

Wrong focus of guilt after OJ Simpson case

WHY ARE so many, mostly white, Americans outraged at the outcome of the Simpson trial? Perhaps there has been a miscarriage of justice, perhaps there has not. Only one person knows that for certain. No one saw Mr Simpson commit the murders, and anyone who followed the trial carefully knows that the evidence was not conclusive. There was certainly room for "reasonable doubt".

The far more frightening upshot of the whole process is that we know most whites thought Mr Simpson was guilty before any verdict was reached, while most blacks thought he was innocent because police set-ups are so familiar to them that the idea of one in this case was not inconceivable (Richard Cohen, August 27).

Perhaps Americans should be more concerned about the number of black men who have been framed by police officers like Mark Fuhrman, and who now sit in prison, perhaps on death row, or who have already been executed. Are not these too miscarriages of justice, equally deserving of our outrage?
Virginia Taylor-Saclioglu,
Istanbul, Turkey

THAT 75 per cent of whites say that O J Simpson is guilty is no surprise. He is only a pawn in the quest of white middle-class America to change judicial structures. One way they can do this is by eroding the criminal burden of proof, which they feel allows a lot of guilty people to go free.

Here, the defendant's right to silence has been removed and his silence could be used against him in a court of law. We know that Michael Howard is only too keen to adopt American penal policies, and any move to abolish the criminal burden of proof would be closely watched in Britain.
Alan Luke,
London

I KNOW there are more African-American men in jail in the UK than in college. I know that innocent black people have been found guilty of murder, and guilty white people have been found innocent of murder by all-white juries. But not even in my most incandescent rage at the racism I face and I see here and around the world would I think that finding a guilty black person innocent or an innocent white person guilty would be the answer.

The O J Simpson trial jury perhaps felt they were in some way making me feel better by letting one of us go; instead I feel a deep, profound shame. It's not uncommon for domestic violence to be treated perfunctorily until the woman is killed but for that to happen after a murder is incomprehensible.
Robin Kelly,
Edgbaston, Birmingham

I HAVE not followed the O J Simpson trial. He may have done it, for all I know. Yet the verdict reminded me of an illuminating experience on a jury some years ago.

In court, the police had produced a partial transcript of a tape-recorded interview with the accused, apparently admitting the offence. We asked to hear that section of the tape-recording — in which he said nothing of the kind.

We too reached a swift, unanimous verdict — not guilty — virtually regardless of our feelings about whether he had done it. Prosecution credibility remains crucial; as does the distinction between a belief about guilt and reasonable proof. And for what it's worth, our accused was also a man of colour; but police carelessness was the main issue.
Philip Kestelman,
London

I WAS struck by something Judge Ito said just before the verdicts were read out. He was warning that anyone who disrupted the proceedings would be removed from the courtroom. But instead of saying "any member of the public . . ." he said "any member of the audience". It says it all.
Dudley Turner,
Westerham, Kent

IF THIS IS the "trial of the century", where does that leave Nuremberg?
Philip H D Smith,
Sutton Coldfield

Where women enjoy freedom

IN RESPONSE to "Japan takes a step towards equality" (Washington Post, September 24). I would remark that in any society if you are looking for sexual inequality you will find it. Japan is no better or no worse in this area than most other advanced nations.

I once knew a Japanese person who, on arriving in America and filling in some detailed immigration form, wanted to know why there was no space on the form for the father's maiden name (in around 10 per cent of Japanese marriages the husband takes the wife's surname).

I enjoy the freedom to go anywhere I like. I walk the streets of a large city after dark and feel no danger. I can leave my front door unlocked when I am alone at home, day or night — two things my mother will not do in a small village in Yorkshire. The freedom from the threat of random male violence is something that Japanese women take entirely for granted but our sisters (and brothers) in many other nations would be extremely envious of.
Mary Murata,
Kimotsuki-gun, Kagoshima, Japan

Ill wind brings papers profit

WHY IS it that I often find the readers' letters more critical and insightful than the rest of the Guardian Weekly? A good example of this phenomenon can be found in the October 1 issue, where both the comment "Beware the age of verbal terrorism" and "It may be rotten but it's right" bleat about how the US press has been held to blackmail by the Unabomber. On page 20 we are also told in "Terrorist tract is hot reading" how this piece of blackmail has been in wide demand causing extra editions to be published.

No mention is made whatsoever that the article has sold more newspaper copies and hence that the blackmail has perhaps profited the newspaper companies.

In the same issue, there is a small letter by Richard Gott succinctly pointing out that this kind of blackmail is not a dangerous precedent since it has happened previously.

In this world of information overload, it would be nice if you try to give the public the facts as clearly as possible and try to reduce the amount of commenting, which should be left to the readers' letters.
(Dr) David Stephenson,
Toulouse, France

Power cut put in perspective

MR LUCKHURST'S response to the inconvenience of a brief electricity cut (September 10) is a source of considerable amusement to us expats here in Indonesia.

It has to do with expectations. Mr Luckhurst's problem was that he expected — probably unconsciously — that so long as he paid his power bills, he would receive an uninterrupted power supply at a constant 50 Hz and 210 volts. So he had not purchased a cold box, nor did he have ice blocks filling half his freezer in anticipation of an emergency. Yet he blames the electricity company for his spoiled scallops! And if he thought the CEO was overpaid, what was to prevent him buying his own generator?

In Indonesia, in contrast, the CEO of PLN is probably paid peanuts, but then we have no expectation that he will deliver the goods, so we never phone in or complain. If the World Bank did a survey to see whether they should invest money in power stations, based on the number of complaints, they would probably conclude that the project was not economic. Even when the power is on, the voltage may vary between 90 and 300 V, so we have to install a regulator as well. And this is a fairly well developed, modern city of 250,000 people.

So please, Colin, stop whingeing, and don't expect us to weep for you.
Edward Webber,
Bengkulu, Sumatra, Indonesia

Don't censor the Internet

I WAS very disappointed to find Roger Eatwell's article "Pure, white and deadly" (September 24).

This thinly-veiled call for censorship of the Internet plays on the fears of those not yet acquainted with this medium. Unlike the unavoidable barrage of advertising and propaganda people face daily from television, radio, newspapers, junk mail and even the telephone, material on the net has to be actively sought out. A person cannot simply stumble across racist, pornographic or similarly offensive material — entering a long "address" is only one stage of the process involved in tracking down pictures or text. Although there are instances of people receiving unwanted e-mail, this mail can be deleted before it is "opened" and read thanks to the subject line that tells the receiver what the message is regarding.

The uninitiated should think of the net as a library, and all of us should question just what exactly on the net is most likely to be censored by the big business and government interests that control the more familiar media: racist and sexist material, or the environmental, labour, human rights, feminist and "third world" news that is presently the only challenge to the status quo.
Sarah Vowles,
Toronto, Canada

Briefly

SIR ROGER BANNISTER (September 24) believes that black people are naturally better athletes than other races on the basis of what he sees in sprint and long distance events. If he asked himself why the sprinters tend to be North American or British and the endurance athletes tend to be African, he might start to get at the cultural reasons behind the phenomenon.

Think about it, Roger, and while you're at it think about the effect opinions like yours have on the lives of black children in schools or black adults trying to find decent jobs.

Your ideas are not new. You share them with many who think that black people are naturally best suited to mindless, physical types of work.
Peter Riddelsdell,
Cairo, Egypt

CANADIANS view with growing alarm attempts by Republicans in Congress to repeal all manner of environmental regulations and wildlife conservation measures ("Green enforcers face ambush", September 24). Opening up the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in north-east Alaska to oil and gas exploration is a case in point. Canada and the United States signed a treaty in 1987 to conserve the 160,000-strong herd which calves in the refuge and in adjacent northern Yukon. Congress has passed budget resolutions and is working now on a budget reconciliation bill to unilaterally override this international agreement.

All of this leaves Canadians questioning the commitment by the US to the rule of international law.
Terry Fenge,
Canadian Arctic Resources Committee, Ottawa, Canada

SO IAN HISLOP doesn't rate the Internet. Is he not aware of the endless hours of fun to be obtained in foreign climes while downloading the weekend football scores only to find that they are not updated yet? To say nothing of the opportunity to relive every single episode of Northern Exposure/ Coronation Street/ Benny Hill etc and swap stories of the stars with fans from around the world.

As a forum for academic information exchange and easy communication the Internet is excellent. As a recreational activity, well I'll join you in that pint, Ian.
Colin Jarvie,
Singapore

SINCE there are already about 50 million people too many living in Britain, what difference will 3 million Hong Kong Chinese make, even if they do all decide to settle? They might even be able to teach us a thing or two about living on an unpleasant, overcrowded and polluted island.
John Leonard,
Canberra, Australia

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Moment of freedom . . . Lead counsel Johnnie Cochran hugs O J Simpson as the jury's verdict is read out. The 'dream team' of defence lawyers later fell out over the handling of the case PHOTO: MYUNG J CHUN

LA police face probe after O J case

Christopher Reed and Ian Katz in Los Angeles

FOLLOWING O J Simpson's acquittal on double murder charges last week, the US attorney general, Janet Reno, announced a justice department investigation into suspected civil rights violations committed by the Los Angeles police department (LAPD). Her decision was a response to the verdict, which has been widely seen as a finding of guilt against the Los Angeles police.

The prosecutors had accumulated what they called a mountain of evidence that Mr Simpson murdered his former wife and a friend in June last year, but 12 citizens — nine of them black, one Hispanic and two whites — unanimously disagreed. Their opinion reflected widespread distrust of the LAPD.

The police, backed by the district attorney, Gil Garcetti, have flatly refused to continue looking for suspects. Johnnie Cochran, Mr Simpson's lead defence counsel, charges that this is blind obstinacy, but in Mr Garcetti's words: "All the evidence points to one suspect. We regard the case as closed."

In predominantly black South-Central Los Angeles, Mr Simpson's claim that he was the victim of a police conspiracy never seemed implausible. "This is what's been going on for years," said Brian "Cat" Long, a 32-year-old gang member turned community activist. "It takes an O J to come along and all of a sudden people say 'This is what justice is?' "

Jubilation over Mr Simpson's acquittal was tempered by a common belief that most black defendants would have stood little chance of exposing such a conspiracy. "There's plenty of 'No Js' that didn't have the resources of O J and could not put up a defence like O J and they are sitting behind bars," said Mr Long.

In 1992 riots erupted in Los Angeles after a white jury acquitted four white policemen who had beaten Rodney King, a black man. The city's payment of $3.8 million compensation to Mr King is only part of a multi-million dollar bill faced by taxpayers for police crimes.

A Los Angeles Times investigation last year showed that in 694 police shooting incidents since 1989, 74.5 per cent of the officers involved were disciplined. It took a team of reporters weeks to uncover these facts, which critics say should be public knowledge.

A recent police shooting of a 14-year-old boy in an Hispanic neighbourhood of Los Angeles has led to another investigation. But no explanation has been offered as to why the officer was still on the gang patrol after being named in 1992 as among 44 officers with serious misconduct records. Since 1986 he had been disciplined three times for violence and misconduct.

Even detective Mark Fuhrman, whose taped boasts of violence and racism helped bring down the case against Mr Simpson, had told a police psychiatrist in 1983 that he had uncontrollable hostility to blacks and Hispanics. His application for a retirement pension was refused on the grounds that he was lying to get a pay-off. He was later promoted.

Meanwhile in his first public statement since his acquittal, Mr Simpson lashed out angrily at those he accused of twisting the facts in his year-long trial.

The former football star's defence lawyers also squabbled publicly over claims that one of them tried to organise a plea bargain, admitting manslaughter, which would have sent a close friend of Simpson's to prison.

Mr Simpson's comments came in a phone call to CNN's Larry King Live television show last week, while Mr Cochran was being interviewed. "Fortunately for me the jury listened to what the witnesses said, and not Marcia Clark's or [prosecutor Christopher] Darden's or anyone else's rendition of what they said."

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Washington Post, page 18

Russia halts Chechen deal

David Hearst in Moscow

RUSSIA on Monday announced it was freezing the disarmament deal it made with Chechen separatists in July, even as an international oil consortium agreed to pipe Azeri oil from the Caspian sea through the Chechen capital, Grozny.

President Boris Yeltsin has come under enormous pressure from the army to stop the negotiations in Grozny and return to the military offensive. The announcement to suspend "temporarily" the deal, under which Russia agreed to pull its troops back as Chechen rebels disarmed, came amid a clamour in Moscow to impose a state of emergency on Grozny as the security situation worsened.

Russian defence and interior ministry forces have been waging full-scale war, without any relevant decree being passed by the president or a referral to the Duma.

But a state of emergency would effectively end four months of talks, and set Russia back on its path of disarming the "bandits" by force.

The crisis came to a head last week, when the commander of Russia's forces in the republic, General Anatoli Romanov, was critically injured in a radio-controlled bomb attack in an underpass in Grozny. Gen Romanov was taken to a Moscow hospital in a coma, but his condition was described as stable. Three people were killed and 10 injured in the attack.

The interior minister, Anatoli Kulikov, and the defence minister, Pavel Grachev, urged Mr Yeltsin to introduce a state of emergency at the weekend. They accuse the Chechen leader, General Dzhokhar Dudayev, of using the talks as a cover for rearmament.

But opinion among his close advisers was divided. Yuri Baturin, his national security adviser, said the declaration of a state of emergency would be "ineffective".

Gen Dudayev's negotiators accused the Russian side of bombing two villages on Sunday night, killing 40 people and wounding 53.

The collapse of the talks in Grozny had been long in coming. Although progress was made on elections, they failed to agree about the status of Chechenia or the failure to disarm Gen Dudayev's forces.

With Gen Dudayev's fighters having returned from their hideouts in the mountain, attacks on Russian troops have mounted.

Hamas may join talks

Derek Brown in Jerusalem

IN AN unprecedented gesture towards the militant group Hamas, Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation last week allowed a delegation from the Islamist organisation to travel to Sudan for talks on Palestinian self-rule.

Five key members of Hamas were allowed to cross into Egypt via the Rafah crossing point, jointly controlled by Israel and the PLO, at the southern end of the Gaza Strip. They were said by Israel Radio to be carrying draft proposals, to be submitted to the leadership in exile, for co-operation with the self-rule Palestinian Authority, dominated by the PLO.

The proposals are said to include a pledge not to launch any further attacks on Israeli targets from territory controlled by the PLO in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

The Hamas leadership, concentrated in Gaza, is divided on how far to co-operate with the PLO. One faction wants to participate in next year's Palestinian elections and to build the movement's political base. Another group rejects the self-rule agreement and wants no part in it.

It was not clear whether the military wing of Hamas, responsible for taking many Israeli lives in suicide bombings and other attacks in the past two years, was represented in the delegation bound for Khartoum.

In the Gaza Strip, the PLO has relaxed its recent hard stand against the Islamists by promising to release several Hamas men from prison, and by allowing the Hamas weekly paper al-Watan to resume publication.

In Jerusalem last week, President Ezer Weizman announced that he would not commute the sentences of two Palestinian women convicted of murder. Israel had promised to release all female prisoners as part of its latest deal with the PLO on extending self-rule in the West Bank.

Israel confirmed on Monday that more than 1,000 men would be freed this week, under the terms of the September 24 agreement. But those terms have already been rewritten, with the repudiation of a promise to release all 27 women detainees.

The row came to a head on Tuesday, with many of the 1,000-plus men due for release refusing to leave prison until all the women are freed.

Washington Post, page 16

Corruption dogs Nato chief

John Palmer in Brussels

NATO'S secretary-general, Willy Claes, insisted last week he had no intention of resigning despite moves by Belgium's supreme court to charge him with corruption and forgery. "I am totally innocent, I have never done anything wrong," Mr Claes said after a meeting of Nato defence ministers in Williamsburg, Virginia.

The court has asked the Belgian parliament to charge Mr Claes, a request likely to revive demands that he should resign until the affair is cleared up.

A commission set up by parliament began work last week on the request from the Cour de Cassation to establish what role Mr Claes may have played in alleged bribes paid by Agusta, an Italian helicopter manufacturer, in trying to win Belgian government contracts in 1988.

Commission members were given a report by the Belgian prosecutor-general, Jacques Velu, and documents about his investigation into the Agusta affair. It will be up to parliament to decide whether Mr Claes, a former leader of the Belgian Flemish socialist party and a minister in the Christian Democrat coalition during the late 1980s, should be charged.

The Agusta scandal has overshadowed Belgian politics for four years. It has led to two violent deaths and the resignations of a number of other socialist leaders.

Money scandal shakes Kenya

Greg Barrow in Nairobi

THE Kenyan government was badly shaken last week by an official report which says that more than £166 million may have been misappropriated from public funds shortly after the country's first multi-party elections in December 1992.

The scandal will further undermine Kenya's reputation with its international donors. It follows Kenya's refusal last week to co-operate with the International War Crimes Tribunal for Rwanda by allowing access to Hutu extremists living in exile.

A detailed report by Kenya's auditor-general exposes irregular and untraceable payments from the treasury amounting to £178.6 million in the year after President Daniel arap Moi's election victory.

David Njoroge, the auditor-general, told parliament last week he had been unable to account for large payments from public funds during 1993. "Documents to support the payments have not been made available to facilitate verification of the payments and the services rendered," he said.

Western diplomats in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi, said they were stunned by the implication that state corruption on such a scale was still continuing. "It's been a difficult week for Kenya," said Henning Kjeldgarrd, the Danish ambassador. "One scandal appears to soon surpass another, and it's always the poorest Kenyan citizens who pay."

The World Bank had an urgent meeting with the Kenyan treasury to discuss the report. "We're continuing our consultations and actively reviewing the auditor-general's report," said Richard Anson, the deputy head of mission for the World Bank in Nairobi.

It was not clear from the report whether the misappropriated funds include money that disappeared in the so-called Goldenberg scandal in which more than £66 million of public funds were used to finance an export compensation scam.

The report has cast a dark cloud over Kenya's forthcoming meeting with aid donor countries in Paris. It may also reflect badly on Musalia Mudavadi, the finance minister, long considered a trustworthy politician.

The Week

THE IRISH poet, Seamus Heaney, has won the Nobel Prize for Literature. The Swedish Academy commended him "for speaking out as an Irish Catholic about violence in Northern Ireland".
Derry's muse, page 36

PRESIDENT Clinton announced a limited softening of Washington's policy towards Havana as part of the growing thaw in US-Cuban relations.
Comment, page 12
Washington Post, page 15

A SENIOR foreign affairs strategist in Chancellor Helmut Kohl's party, Karl Lamers, said there was little point in talking to Britain on EU reform. He said the best policy was to present the UK with facts it had no choice but to accept.

THE Macedonian president, Kiro Gligorov, narrowly escaped death when a booby-trapped car exploded as he was being driven to his office in the capital, Skopje.

SENATOR Sam Nunn, one of the Democratic party's last bastions in the South, announced he would not be seeking re-election next year.

FUMIHIRO JOYU, spokesman and de facto leader of the doomsday cult Aum Shinrikyo, has been arrested by Japanese police. He was believed to be the cult's last leader still free.

GUATEMALA'S president, Ramiro de Leon Carpio, has accepted the resignation of his defence minister, General Mario Enriquez, following an army massacre of 11 peasants in a remote northern town.

HUNDREDS of Comoros soldiers who surrendered to a French force were released from detention under an amnesty granted to supporters of the short-lived mercenary coup.

OMAR OUARTILAN, the editor-in-chief of Al-Khabar, one of Algeria's most authoritative newspapers, was shot dead by suspected Muslim extremists.

AN EARTHQUAKE measuring 7.6 on the Richter scale struck Mexico's Pacific coast, killing at least 66 people and injuring more than 100.

JAPAN'S justice minister, Tomoharu Tazawa, resigned over a controversy surrounding an undeclared loan.

THE WORLD chess champion, Garry Kasparov, secured his title for the fifth time, fighting off a tough challenge from Vishwanathan Anand to draw the 17th game and build an insurmountable lead in their match.

'Cathedral' blaze infuriates Maoris

Andrew Higgins in Auckland

THE CHURCH had stood for 147 years as a monument to the hope that Maori and European could live together. Its altar was adorned with cloth presented by Queen Victoria, its walls decorated with woven reed of a tribal assembly hall.

But newspapers and television in New Zealand on Monday showed a more disturbing symbolism — pictures of a charred skeleton of broken timber and scorched brick.

A weekend fire at Rangiatea Anglican Church, also known as the Maori Cathedral, in the town of Otaki, north of the capital, Wellington, gutted a cherished national treasure and destroyed a fragile faith in the common cause of Maori and Pakeha, or whites.

The blaze, a month before the Queen arrives in New Zealand to open the Commonwealth summit, follows a string of Maori attacks on totems of white authority.

The cause of the fire has yet to be determined but arson is widely suspected. Police are questioning an elderly white man who was seen near the church. Detectives say his "odd attire" should have attracted attention.

"The great tree in the forest has fallen," said Bishop Muru Walters, during a service on Sunday at the site of the razed church. "The people are still weeping for this treasure handed down by our ancestors."

Wellington's Evening Post described the church as "every bit as significant to New Zealand as the great castles and cathedrals are to the countries of Europe". It called for the church to be rebuilt, and said the building was a "a symbol of the shared values that unite our two cultures".

The church was built in 1848, the result of a rare collaboration between an early missionary, Octavius Hadfield, and a venerated Maori warrior, Te Rauparaha, who had fought against land-hungry English settlers. The exterior looked European and its interior, dominated by huge support poles, resembled a traditional Maori hall.

"It was the last building of its kind we had. Its destruction is a terrible tragedy," said Sarah Tidwell, a lecturer on architecture at Auckland University. "It was neither European nor Maori, but a mix of the two. It epitomised the entangling of our two cultures."

But a growing number of Maoris see such intermingling as a fraud, a convenient cover for a system that stripped them of their land, marginalised their language and dumped 40 per cent of their young adults on to the unemployment queue.

"We are fed up with double standards and double talk," said Derek Fox, a prominent Maori broadcaster. "Maoris are unemployed and disaffected. This is one nation, but it has two peoples."

As the country polarises, institutions and ceremonies previously seen as part of a common heritage shared by the whole country are under threat.

One of the main battle grounds has been language. While Maoris struggle with new vigour to preserve their tongue, most non-Maoris, who make up about 85 per cent of the population, steadfastly resist any dilution of the English language's monopoly.

Common ground is shrinking. New Zealand's national day celebrations in the Mission House descended into chaos after Maori protesters tried to burn down the building. They trampled the national flag and bared tattooed buttocks at the governor-general.

Maori radicals infuriated and frightened many whites with this attack and other attempts to desecrate New Zealand's past.

The real focus of Maori protest, however, has been more pedestrian and much more effective — a long legal battle to force the government to abide by an agreement in 1840 between Britain and tribal chiefs. Under the Treaty of Waitangi Maoris ceded sovereignty while Britain guaranteed their rights to the land.

Firefighters tackle the smouldering timbers of the Rangiatea church, the 'Maori Cathedral', in Otaki, near Wellington PHOTO: MICHAEL SMITH

Mexico opposition death rate rises

Phil Gunson in Mexico City

ROGELIO Jiménez López was bringing home a car battery to connect up to his television in the small town of Tila, in the southern Mexican state of Chiapas, when police and paramilitaries shot him without provocation, according to his neighbours. Then they put a gun on his chest and tied a bandana round his neck before driving the remaining 460 inhabitants from their homes and setting fire to the town.

Jiménez was a member of the opposition Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD). Now, he is number 330 on the PRD's list of its activists murdered since 1988. The "p" for "political" next to the date of his death means he is believed to have been killed for being a PRD member.

During Carlos Salinas de Gortari's presidency, from 1988 to 1994, 264 PRD members were murdered and 12 more "disappeared". By September this year, less than 10 months into the supposedly reformist government of Ernesto Zedillo, a further 73 had died — making this the bloodiest year so far for the party.

In Chiapas, where the government claims that no shots have been fired since the 12-day war between the army and Zapatista rebels in January 1994, more people have died in subsequent political violence than the official toll of war dead.

While 145 are said to have been killed before the government declared a ceasefire, the diocesan human rights office in San Cristóbal de las Casas has recorded more than 150 political murders since then. Of these, 29 were allegedly motivated by the victim's PRD affiliation.

In the state of Guerrero, the PRD says that 55 activists have been murdered and six "disappeared" since the state's governor, Rubén Figueroa, came to power in 1993. The National Action Party (PAN), not the PRD, is now the main opposition party. The PAN has lost members, but the PRD continues to suffer losses out of all proportion to its national electoral importance.

The reason, according to Mari-Claire Acosta of the Mexican Commission for the Promotion and Defence of Human Rights, is that the PRD has "a greater presence in the areas of greatest conflict", which tend to be remote and rural. The PAN is strongest in urban and northern areas, "where political disputes are resolved in a different way".

Gilberto López y Rivas, the PRD national executive member responsible for human rights, blames Mr Zedillo: "By omission, or through negligence and inertia, the president is opting for a hardline solution."

Le Monde, page 22

Wafer allergy bars priests

Madeleine Bunting

THE Vatican has provoked fury by issuing a decree banning men who suffer from an allergy to gluten from becoming priests.

The extraordinary ruling would in theory have prohibited one of the most prominent Catholic clerics of the postwar period from being ordained — the Archbishop of Liverpool, Derek Worlock, who suffers from the allergy known as coeliac disease.

All communion wafers must contain gluten to be suitable for the celebration of the Eucharist, the Vatican has decreed.

Gluten, the protein in wheat, triggers the debilitating coeliac disease, which afflicts more than 50,000 people in the UK.

"Given the centrality of the Eucharist in the life of the priest, candidates for the priesthood who are affected by celiac [sic] disease . . . may not be admitted to Holy Orders," reads the letter from Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, the prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, one of the most powerful bodies in the Catholic church. The letter was sent to the presidents of episcopal conferences around the world during the summer.

Monsignor Kieran Conry of the Catholic Media Office said the ban on coeliacs was unlikely to be applied, and dismissed it as "simply the logic of the letter".

EU clash looms on N-tests

Stephen Bates in Brussels

THE French government was on collision course with the European Commission over its nuclear tests in the South Pacific last week as an official team of European Union scientists reported that it had been denied access to the atolls where they took place, despite being promised full co-operation.

The snub was reported as France denied a report in the Paris daily Le Monde that large cracks had opened under the main testing site on Mururoa.

"Never have any cracks of any kind been spotted," the foreign minister, Hervé de Charette, told the national assembly. He said the map produced by Le Monde was a fake.

But the paper stuck by its story that cracks under the atoll could be torn open by future explosions. It said the map was drawn by the military at Mururoa in 1980, and had been smuggled out of the base by a Polynesian employee.

France's Atomic Energy Commission said the existence of the cracks was well known and insisted that they were found only in the upper levels of coral beneath the atolls and not in the lower basalt levels in which the nuclear devices were exploded.

The EU scientists sent to inspect the nuclear test site — who have returned to Brussels — told the commission that they had not been allowed to inspect the facilities on Mururoa atoll, where the first test took place, or visit Fangataufa, the site of the second test, or Faaa, a third island.

● Britain has extended its backing for French nuclear testing in the South Pacific by claiming for the first time that European legislation on atomic experiments should not cover military tests.

A house full of feuding families

With a momentous set of elections coming up, **David Hearst** and **James Meek** in Moscow look at the main protagonists and who supports them

FIVE YEARS after the fall of communism, and in the grip of a nationalist revival, Russia is entering nine months of political turmoil. There are parliamentary elections in December and Boris Yeltsin has repeatedly vowed, against mounting scepticism, to hold presidential elections next June.

These elections are not just about the fate of a prime minister or a president. They will chart the future course of the only other nuclear superpower, which is in the full throes of free market revolution. Russia has not only lost its empire, its client states, and its markets, it is in danger of losing its cohesion as a multi-ethnic state. With a separatist war in Chechenia inside its border and 25 million Russians outside, the Yugoslav scenario looms large.

The prime minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin, who heads a party facing certain defeat at the polls, is already in trouble, with his enemies lining up.

The army is facing a second bitter winter in Chechenia. Military chiefs blame the prime minister's dovish policies for halting the advance against Dzhokhar Dudayev's rebel forces, just when they were up against the wall. The policy of negotiating has failed to achieve either fresh elections in Chechenia or disarmament.



Chernomyrdin: enemies already lining up

There's the powerful military industrial complex, starved of state orders, and primary victim of Mr Chernomyrdin's macro-economic stabilisation policies. Who profits from these, they ask. The answer is Mr Chernomyrdin's own oil and gas lobby, which alone can find quick profits from the export of raw materials to the West.

And there's the tight clique of security chiefs around Mr Yeltsin, men like Alexander Korjakov, who heads the presidential bodyguard, and Mikhail Barsukov, head of the newly-strengthened Federal Security Service, the former KGB, which is spearheading an anti-corruption drive.

Mr Yeltsin has a choice. Does he stick with a prime minister who is expected to achieve only a derisory 8 per cent of the seats in the new Duma, or does he jump horses now, before the elections? It would not be the first time he has ditched an ally.

The Communists are making strong advances. In Volgograd, a major industrial centre in southern Russia, they took 22 out of 24 seats in recent local elections. Nor is this an isolated result. They now control local parliaments in the Vladimir and Orlovski regions and achieved a strong result in Tatarstan.

In the rural areas, the Agrarian Party, ideologically close to the Communists, stands to make sweeping gains. Both parties are organised, and both are working in tandem. The "communo-agrarians" could form the largest faction in the new parliament.

The word "communism" does not appear in the Communist Party programme and its leader, Gennady Zyuganov, has promised to keep all local administrations "who work honestly" in place. His attempt to distance his party from other orthodox communist parties has produced criticism from the left of opportunism but helped him gain respectability.

If the country votes left of centre and smashes Mr Chernomyrdin's party, Our Home Is Russia, Yuri Skokov — a moderate technocrat and the former secretary of the powerful security council — is well placed to present himself as a compromise prime ministerial candidate. Allied with Mr Skokov is the renegade former commander of the 14th Army in Transdniestr, General Alexander Lebed, whom the disaffected officer class would like to have as defence minister.

By contrast to the clever tactics of the communists and the agrarians, the democrats and the extreme nationalists are divided. Vladimir Zhirinovsky's Liberal Democratic Party is in decline and nobody expects a repeat of the shock result in the last parliamentary elections two years ago.

For the three main democrat factions, such as Russia's Choice headed by former deputy prime minister Yegor Gaidar, the main problem is how to overcome a hurdle of 5 per cent of the votes below which the party list fails as a mechanism for getting seats in parliament. The most likely to get back in is Grigori Yavlinksi's Yabloko, a faction of liberal economists that has been scathing of Mr Chernomyrdin's government and Mr Yeltsin's administration.

Earlier this year, Mr Gaider and Mr Yavlinski flirted with a joint ticket, but the latter — who is the more popular of the two — disowned the idea.

Mr Yeltsin, one of the main opportunists of Russian politics, has used communism, radical democracy and Russian nationalism to stay on top. Whatever the outcome of a turbulent parliamentary election, he will reform his political image once again.

Health reform may derail Republicans



The US this week

Martin Walker

CONGRESSMAN Ed Markey of Massachusetts thought he had the timing just right. The Republicans were getting deeper and deeper into trouble with their Medicare reform plans, despite their insistence that they were not "cutting" this system of subsidising health care for the elderly, but "saving" it. They even had a digital clock hanging above the committee room which ticked down, second by second, to the bankruptcy of the Medicare fund, which looms within six years.

So Congressman Markey, one of the most attractive of the remaining liberal Democrats, organised two staffers to carry an alternative clock he had devised. They came into the committee room and erected his "Countdown to the Republican tax cut for the rich". It served to illustrate Markey's repeated claim that the $270 billion the Republicans plan to save on Medicare is suspiciously close to the $245 billion in tax cuts they are promising to the better-off.

"The Republicans like to be called the GOP," Markey began. "It used to stand for Grand Old Party. But these days we know what GOP stands for — it stands for Get Old People."

It was a wonderful line, and it ran on the hourly CNN News cycle throughout the day, and looked to be the lead item on the Network evening news shows, the first time the Democrats' attack on the Medicare scheme could be said to have caught the national imagination. But then the O J Simpson jury came out to say they had reached a verdict. Judge Ito ordered the verdict sealed overnight, and Ed Markey's attack was relegated down the news schedule.

But not everywhere. Markey's "Get Old People" line ran big in his home town of Boston, in Chicago and Detroit and in Miami. And this was just the beginning. Markey offered two amendments to the Republican Medicare bill, and saw each of them defeated in committee.

The first sought to ensure that when one member of an elderly couple goes into a nursing home, the other will not be forced to sell the family house and exhaust the family savings to pay the fees. Currently, under the Medicaid system, the family home, and enough savings to ensure a $14,000-a-year income, are sacrosanct. Not any more, under the new Republican bill.

"When we can get the word out to the old people of America what this implies — that you lose your family home, that you are pauperised — there will be a political tidal wave. For a start, Bill Clinton carries Florida next year," Markey tells the Guardian, referring to the high proportion of old people who have retired to Florida.

His second amendment tried to ensure that the savings and income of the children of old people who go into a nursing home will not be tapped to pay for Granny's care. The Republicans defeated this one too.

"This one is the killer," says Markey. "When we get the word out that the fortysomethings of America will have to take a sick parent into their own home, or bankrupt themselves to pay for a nursing home, Bill Clinton carries every other state in the country, and the Democrats are voted back into a majority in Congress."

Maybe. The Washington Post-ABC polls last week showed that the Democrats now enjoy a 7 per cent lead over the Republicans in voting intentions for congressional races. If that lead can be maintained, that would be the end of the Gingrich revolution. The approval rating of Gingrich and the Republican Congress is down to just over 30 per cent. The Democrats' problem is that they have too few Ed Markeys, congressmen who can make the transition from 40 years of running the place to the entirely different challenges of opposition. They need people who, in the words of Clinton's 1992 campaign strategist James Carville, "wake up every morning thinking how do I screw the other side today".

Still, the Republicans are doing a remarkable job of screwing up themselves. The discipline and unanimity of view which marked Speaker Newt Gingrich's troops as they closed ranks in the first half of this year to pass much of their "Contract with America" has given way to business as usual in Congress. They failed to pass their own Defence bill, because the zealots refused to vote for a law which allowed abortions to take place in military hospitals. They failed to pass their Interior bill, because 91 Republicans joined the Democrats to try to stop the subsidised pillage of the federal lands in the West by the mining interests.

The Republicans have lost their crucial virtue, their dedication to cutting the budget. Governor Terry Branstead of Iowa is the steward of the Iowa caucuses, the first tussle of the presidential primary season, an event of some importance to Senator Bob Dole, who expects to win it comfortably. So when the governor comes to Washington to lobby, he is paid great respect. He was worried by the House ways and means committee's decision to scrap $1.8 billion in subsidies for producers of ethanol, the fuel made from corn. It would hurt Iowa farmers, he said piously.

It would also hurt the massive agribusiness conglomerate of Archer-Daniels-Midland, a major donor to political campaigns. The company has its own political action committee (PAC) to channel its campaign funds. Dole has received $76,000 from it, and Dole's foundation has got another $160,000. James Whittinhill, who used to be Dole's deputy chief of staff, now



works for the Renewable Fuels Association, the ethanol lobbying group. But Dole's rivals for the Republican nomination, Senator Phil Gramm and Senator Richard Lugar, also opposed the attempt to cut 3 cents from the 54 cents-a-gallon tax break for ethanol. Gingrich bowed to all this pressure, and will have to look elsewhere for the $1.8 billion in savings.

The broader attempt to cut farm subsidies has been watered down by the farm state senators and congressmen. Pat Roberts, chairman of the House agriculture committee, had a sensible plan called the Freedom to Farm Act. It would drop the old system of crop subsidies and convert them into limited cash payments for small farmers who

The approval rating of Gingrich and the Republican Congress is down to just over 30 per cent

needed them, and then start nudging the total sum down over seven years. His own committee rejected it, as congressmen rallied to save the peanut subsidy, the sugar subsidy and all the other little sweeteners that Democratic majorities took care of over the years.

Gingrich's zealots came into power vowing to cut "pork" — public spending to help individual congressional districts. This did not last long. The military construction bill includes $55 million for Dole's home state, twice what the Pentagon had requested. Lockheed-Marietta, the defence industry giant located at Marietta, lies in the heart of Gingrich's home district, and the company is treated with extraordinary generosity in the Defence bill. House Whip Tom DeLay wanted a permit to build a municipal golf course on wetlands in his own district. The Environmental Protection Agency tried to save the wetlands. DeLay's golf votes won. Gramm wanted a new agricultural research facility at his old university, Texas A&M. The funds had not been requested in the bill sent up by the Department of Agriculture, but they were by the time the senators started voting.

All this helps to explain the Republicans' loss of momentum, the increased back-biting among themselves and the growing cynicism of voters. And it also explains the logjam of authorisation bills that have yet to go up to President Clinton for authorisation. The Republicans are missing deadlines, and leaving themselves open to the charge that they are a bunch of amateurs unfit to legislate competently. Not only does it begin to look as though the Republicans may lose in two years the congressional majority they waited 40 years to win; on this autumn's performance, they will deserve to lose it.

But there is a serious cost involved, because the chief difficulty of the Republicans is their attempt to reform Medicare and Medicaid. Clinton tried to reform the health system, and went down to defeat. The Republicans are tackling the same problem from another approach, and have run into serious trouble. Health reform is becoming the third rail of American politics: touch it and die.

But it will have to be tackled, in the United States as elsewhere. The entire industrialised world is working with pension, welfare and health systems that were designed for the days when men retired from work at 65 and then had the decency to die two or three years later, thus not costing the national treasuries much at all. As they live on into their 80s, and rightly insist on the best health care available, the costs become unsupportable, particularly as changing demographic patterns mean there will be fewer adult workers to pay for the ever-larger numbers of pensioners. As it happens, the US is in rather less trouble than Germany or Japan, which by 2025 will have one pensioner for every employed adult. In the US, it will be two workers for every pensioner.

The Republicans are right to say this should be tackled now. But Clinton was equally right in 1993 to say the entire health system should be tackled then, and look where that got him. In a rational political world, this would be the time to bring Mrs Hillary Clinton with her health reform plan into the same room as the Republicans with their Medicare proposal and to compare notes. There are many similarities, from the emphasis on managed competition, the move towards health maintenance organisations rather than individual doctor-patient relations, caps on hospital fees and so on. There are also similarities in the way that both the Clinton and the Republican plans are being attacked, often by the same organisations, using the same methods of emotive TV ads.

But this is not a rational political world. This is the US gearing up for a presidential election, while the Republicans try to consolidate their control of Congress, and the Democrats begin to see the prospect of regaining their majority.

"I wake up every morning depressed, knowing that the Republicans are determined to dismantle just about everything of the New Deal and of the Great Society. And I get to work, and see the mean, vindictive way they go about it and I get angry, and start to think how I can hurt them today. I start to the cheer up and by the time I get to bed, I'm feeling pretty good again," says Congressman Markey. "Then I wake up depressed again."

"It's very different from what I used to do, running a committee that was writing the bills that would shape our telecommunications industry for the future. It's a different kind of politics, but it's the one we Democrats have to learn. It's not the old GOP we are facing, It really is a bunch whose hidden agenda is Get Old People and give the money to the rich."

Helmsmen fail 'rudderless' France

This week's general strike is the latest indicator of a crisis of public confidence in the ruling élite's ability to govern, writes **Jonathan Steele**

THE palace at Versailles has rarely hosted such a splendid soirée: cocktails on the Apollo terrace, a light buffet in the Orangery, dinner in the Gallery of Battles, a concert in the Royal Chapel and a disco in the palace apartments.

Revelling in this finery earlier this month were the alumni of France's most prestigious educational establishment, the Ecole Nationale d'Administration (ENA). As they celebrated the school's 50th anniversary, there were proud boasts that they have rapidly come to dominate the country's top jobs even more comprehensively than does Oxbridge in Britain.

The one regret was that two fellow graduates failed to turn up. Neither President Jacques Chirac nor his prime minister, Alain Juppé, joined the gathering.

Perhaps, for once, they were showing a touch of political intelligence. No other French leaders have seen their popularity collapse in the polls so rapidly after coming to power. Their presence among the "ENArchy" living it up in the pre-revolutionary luxury of Versailles could have been one symbol too many for a society which has never been so disillusioned with its leaders.

You do not have to be on the left to see the Chirac collapse as the mark of a deep crisis of governance rather than a banana skin. Alain Madelin, the conservative recently sacked as finance minister, told businessmen earlier this month that France was witnessing the rejection of an élite comparable to the events leading to the French revolution of 1789.

"It's the beginning of a Tocquevillian process," Dominique Moisi, deputy director of the French Institute of International Relations, says. "When De Tocqueville described the fall of the old regime, he said it crumbled when people felt the privileges it enjoyed no longer corresponded to what it did for the public good. If today's state cannot give people security from crime and terrorism or from the loss of their jobs, why should they respect power?"

For Alain Touraine, a distinguished political scientist and author, France is a "drunken ship", rolling rudderless and leaderless, and in danger of hitting the rocks as destructively as in May 1968. "In 1958, it broke itself over Algeria. That was a crisis of nation. In 1968, it broke again in a crisis of society. Now, France must change its model of management or break itself for the third time," he says.

Signs of the crisis are everywhere. The entire public service took part in a general strike on Tuesday involving up to 5 million people. The employers' organisation, the "patronat", is furious with Mr Juppé for raising taxes rather than cutting spending to reduce the deficit. Meanwhile, unemployment — the issue Mr Chirac campaigned on — is edging up to the 3 million mark. And the normally subservient press and judiciary are incensed by Mr Juppé's intervention to have the rent lowered on his government flat.

It is as though Washington's Watergate and the Italian "revolt of the judges" have finally found an equivalent in France. The Paris prosecutor has started a preliminary inquiry into the Juppe affair.

Any notion that Mr Chirac could be a new version of his hero, De Gaulle, is ridiculed. "In 1958, De Gaulle was able to go before a crowd of settlers in Algeria who were ready to smash everything and calm them with four words: 'I have understood you.' Chirac could never do that," a businessman in Lyons said.

Many in the business community seek a Thatcher rather than a De Gaulle. They believe the only solution to the crisis is a tough dose of neo-liberal economics, with ruthless cuts in public spending, privatisation of state-owned giants such as Air France and France Telecom, and a dramatic reduction in employers' national insurance contributions to make it cheaper to take on workers. But the sacking of Mr Madelin, the nearest thing to a Thatcherite in Mr Juppé's team, depressed them.

Although his departure confirmed analysts who say France's tradition of a strong state means Thatcherism could never take root, it has not resolved the contradictions in the government. The final choice has yet to be made between Mr Juppé's "wet conservatism" and the more social-democratic Keynesianism of Philippe Séguin, often tipped as his potential successor.

Both men belong to Mr Chirac's party, but their differences reflect what may be the real divide in French politics: the split dubbed by the political scientist Pierre Hassner as being between the "Lili" and the "Bobo".

The Lili are the economically liberal libertarians. They can be found in all the mainstream parties, from nominal socialists such as Michel Rocard to the outgoing conservative Edouard Balladur, from Jacques Delors to Giscard d'Estaing. The Bobo are the Bonapartist Bolsheviks, who include Mr Séguin and Mr Mitterrand, or in the past the radical tradition of Pierre Mendes-France.

The confusion on economic management has been heightened by the latest furore over the single European currency. The sudden perception that even the Germans may be backing off monetary union, for fear that the new currency will be weaker than the Deutschmark, has launched a subterranean explosion. It is not yet visible in the French press or on public platforms but, for the first time since the Maastricht referendum three years ago, establishment voices are beginning to question off the record the policy of a strong franc.

CRITICS of the *franc fort* calculate that it has cost between 800,000 and 1 million French jobs in the past few years. Mr Séguin used to be one of the critics. Although he now follows the public orthodoxy of supporting the present exchange rate, he might well return to the idea of changing it if the suspicions of the business community mount.

Those who have most benefited from it are people who work in strong internationally competitive industries, or individuals who have modern skills in research, communications or business management. They can sell themselves to the highest bidder at home or abroad.

Alain Touraine says: "In France there are roughly 5 million people who are marketable internationally. Another 5 million are OK on the internal market, like builders, architects, plumbers and repair people. Five million are protected by the state . . . Five million are on welfare or retired with pensions, and the last 5 million are *foutu* [screwed]."

Emmanuel Todd, a senior researcher at the National Institute for Demographic Studies, says: "France has become more civic and peaceful than it was in 1968."

Although the plight of the excluded is catastrophic, it has little impact on those who run the country. "The crisis is the relationship between the middle class and the élite — partly because of the incompetence of the ENArchy."

What worries him most is the power of the National Front, led by Jean-Marie Le Pen. Like many other French analysts, he believes Mr Chirac's collapse, added to economic crisis and disillusionment with Europe, is playing into the hands of the National Front. "It has already become the main working-class party in France," he says.

If a substantial section of the middle class also switches to Le Pen, France would be in danger.

Strike blow to Juppé's hopes

Paul Webster in Paris

RAILWAY workers brought traffic to a halt on the eve of a public sector strike that could deal a body blow to a Gaullist-led government already in difficulties over monetary turmoil, high-level corruption, nuclear testing, and a terrorist scare.

Speculation over devaluation of the franc and an eventual replacement for the prime minister, Alain Juppé, provided the background for Tuesday's 24-hour protest.

Five million civil servants, teachers, postal staff, state airline crews, public transport employees, local government officers and state industry workers joined demonstrations.

Civil servants are angry because government leaders have openly treated them as privileged employees, saying they were selfish to protest over a planned wage freeze when they had stable jobs.

The timing, less than five months after Jacques Chirac was elected president, underlines a resurgence of leftwing opposition as Socialist party militants backed Lionel Jospin as the party's new first secretary.

Mr Jospin's rising fortunes contrast with the collapse in electoral support for Mr Juppé and Mr Chirac. Although Tuesday marked the most crippling transport strike since 1986, the malaise goes far deeper than a politically inspired socialist and communist challenge to a weak government.

Even without the strike, Mr Juppé faced no respite from threats to his precarious future. The possibility of devaluation, despite a rise in interest rates, is being seen as a mark of international lack of confidence in Mr Juppé's economic policy that could accelerate his departure.

His biggest danger is a new flare-up in corruption allegations over his Paris council flat, from which he has said he will move out. The state prosecutor is studying documents that allegedly show he lowered the flat's rent while assistant mayor.

The Week in Britain James Lewis

Tories lose their party spirit

CONSERVATIVES, it is often said, are great political survivors, and John Major demonstrated that tribal instinct when, against the odds, he rallied his ranks to rob Labour of victory in 1992. Little trace is now to be seen of that will to survive, and the Tories embarked on their annual conference this week in a spirit of unease that no amount of platform bluster could disguise.

Even the canny former Foreign Secretary, Lord Howe, conceded that his party would find it "very hard" to win a general election. He cited splits over Europe as one of the issues which would ensure a Labour victory. Even today, he said, Lady Thatcher was casting a baleful shadow over the party, and it was wrong that her followers, Thatcher's children, should still be "bashing on regardless". He said it was a misjudgment to suppose that tax cuts would offer the party a miracle escape route from its unpopularity.

Another misjudgment by Mr Major may have been his decision to appoint Michael Heseltine, once the darling of the dinner party round, as his deputy following his victory in the Tory leadership contest earlier this year. Some ministers are complaining privately that Mr Heseltine is "trying it on" and interfering in their departments, while others fear that his gung-ho style is diminishing, rather than enhancing, the authority of the Prime Minister.

Voters are also reminded almost daily of the splits in Tory ranks by the likes of the embittered former Chancellor, Norman Lamont, who last week failed to be selected to fight the safe seat of Kingston and Surbiton. Mr Lamont, whose Kingston upon Thames constituency disappears as a result of boundary changes, has never hidden his hostility to Mr Major, who removed him from office, and this may well have cost him votes in the selection contest. The vote went in favour of the sitting Surbiton MP, Richard Tracey. "He may be a nobody, but at least he's a loyal nobody," one commentator said.

Loyalty is highly prized by Tory workers who lick envelopes to win election victory for their candidates. It used also to be the byword of Tory MPs and ministers when in office. Disloyalty and factional in-fighting was the preserve of the Labour party. Not any more — particularly after last week's Labour conference.

Labour, at 50 per cent, are currently 20 percentage points ahead of the Tories in the opinion polls. An eve-of-conference poll suggested that, in the next general election, Labour could command a maximum of 62 per cent, while the Tory maximum could not exceed 40 per cent. The Tory minimum could fall as low as 19 per cent, though the Labour minimum could not fall below 40 per cent.

As with other polls, of course, this one assumed a uniform swing across the country, which seldom happens. Hence the battle for the hearts and minds of "Middle England," wherever that is supposed to be.

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Comment, page 12

A JUDGE put the tabloid press on trial last week. He accused eight newspapers of prejudicing a trial and referred them to the Attorney-General for possible prosecution for contempt of court. He claimed that a series of interviews, articles and headlines made it impossible for Geoff Knights, the boyfriend of Gillian Taylforth, an actress in the BBC soap opera, EastEnders, to receive a fair trial. He was accused of causing grievous bodily harm to a minicab driver.

Newspapers in Britain have long pushed at the boundaries of pre-trial reporting restrictions. But prosecutions for contempt have been rare, which has doubtless encouraged editors to push their luck even further, with the result that few can say with any certainty what is, and what is not, now permissible under the 1981 Contempt of Court Act, which itself is far from unequivocal.

Judge Roger Sanders, who halted the Knights trial before a jury had been sworn in, ruled that a potential jury would be prejudiced by the material published in the eight papers (he also pointed the finger at two journalists). He described it as "unlawful, misleading, scandalous and malicious". What is hard to believe is that lawyers employed by eight papers should all have given their editors bad advice.

It is not long since the Court of Appeal quashed the murder convictions of the two Taylor sisters on the grounds that the jury must have been influenced by inaccurate and prejudicial reporting. But no action was taken against the publishers of the offending material.

Sir Nicholas Lyell, the Attorney-General, with whom the decision lies, is a government minister, and therefore open to suspicion that political partisanship might conflict with his legal duties. What minister would choose to level criminal charges against the editors of tabloid papers on which his party will depend for crucial support in a general election?

THE RITZ Hotel in London, one of the most glamorous names in the world-wide leisure business, was bought for £75 million by the reclusive but rich Barclay twins (whose estimated worth stands at £550 million). They failed in an earlier attempt to buy the Ritz but their offer to pay £15 million more than its book value, allowed them to add the trophy to their collection.

The brothers live in a castle hideaway in the Channel Islands and already have stakes in some of the capital's glitziest casinos and hotels, including the Cadogan and Berkeley.

The Trafalgar House group, whose portfolio includes the QE2, paid £3 million for the Ritz in 1976, but the place has been creating a hole in the group's pocket ever since. Though still prestigious — the cheapest room costs £200 a night and a two-bedroom suite £895 — it is considered, with 130 rooms, unlikely ever to be hugely profitable. Its new owners, Frederick and David, who are generally told apart by the side on which they part their hair, may well have plans for the Ritz, but they have never been known to utter a word to the press.

Austin

West trial 'harrowing'

Duncan Campbell

WORDS could not express the terrible and gruesome deaths suffered by 10 young women and girls at the hands of Rosemary West and her husband, Fred, the jury at Mrs West's trial heard last week. For many of them, their last moments had been as objects of sexual depravity, and death must have come as a merciful release.

A packed Winchester crown court heard that the Wests not only kidnapped young, vulnerable women, many of them runaways, and tortured them in the cellar of their home at 25 Cromwell Street but also killed their own eldest daughter and Fred West's daughter, Charmaine. Their naked, dismembered bodies had been buried beneath the house, trussed up and gagged so that they could not scream for help.

The Crown prosecutor, Brian Leveson QC, said that it was abundantly clear that the couple had acted together in the murders, which happened between 1971 and 1997. The victims were killed either as part of violent sexual activity or because they could not ever be released to tell their gruesome tale.

"At the core of this case is the relationship between Frederick and Rosemary West," Mr Leveson told the jury of eight men and four women.

"Much of what follows can be explained in the context that both were obsessed with sex. The Wests shared a knowledge about each other which bound them together. Frederick West had found the perfect companion."

As the prosecution case unfolded, Rosemary West, aged 41, widow of Frederick West, a Gloucester builder, who hanged himself in his Winson Green prison cell on New Year's Day this year, dabbed at her face with a tissue as Mr Leveson recounted events which he warned the jury were horrific and harrowing.

Mrs West is charged with 10 murders, including those of her eldest daughter, Heather, aged 16, and her stepdaughter, Charmaine, aged eight. She pleads not guilty to all charges and is defended by Richard Ferguson QC. Mr Justice Mantell is presiding over the trial and the proceedings are being relayed to two news-media annexes in the court house as there is only room for 30 journalists in the court.

Mr Leveson said that many of the girls had been picked up while hitchhiking, taken to Cromwell Street and held for many days for the couple's sexual gratification before their death. Others had gone to the house voluntarily and had lived as lodgers before being killed and butchered.

Witnesses would tell of Mrs West's violent sexual appetite and how Fred liked to video his wife's activities. The house contained hoods, whips and sexual paraphernalia.

It would have been impossible for Fred West to have acted alone, the court was told. "Rosemary West fully participated and bears a full measure of responsibility," Mr Leveson said.

The case continues.

Poor hit worst by asthma

Tim Radford

ASTHMA — which could now be costing Britain more than £1 billion a year — is more than twice as likely to disable those in the two poorest social groups, according to a report from the National Asthma Campaign.

More than 3 million people in Britain suffer from asthma. Half of them are children. One adult sufferer in 10 — around 200,000 — is disabled by the affliction. More than a third of those with severe asthma were unemployed, and 90 per cent of these put their unemployment down to asthma.

Asthma remains a puzzling disease — at least 200 substances have been identified as causing sufferers to start gasping for breath — and its increase in recent years everywhere in the world is also a puzzle.

Although the Health and Safety Executive last year launched a campaign to make employers aware of hazards in the workplace — which range from flour in bakeries to chemicals in industry — asthma usually begins at home, possibly with dust and dust mites. But the link between asthma and poverty itself is enigmatic.

"It affects everybody regardless of class," said a spokesman for the National Asthma Campaign, launching National Asthma Week. "But the lower your social class the more severe it is likely to be. If your asthma is very severe you can't work, so you have all those extra stresses that bring you into poverty. If you are poor then you can't afford the special treatments, the bedding, the nebuliser, to control your symptoms. It's a catch-22 situation, really."

Eighty-six per cent of those disabled by asthma are in social groups 3, 4, and 5, and only 14 per cent of the disabled are in classes 1 and 2.

Briton to head Benedictines

Madeleine Bunting

THE first English head of the worldwide Benedictine order has been elected in France, marking another step in the growing influence of the order in English Catholicism.

Abbot Francis Rossiter will be based in Rome and act as spokesman for the order's 9,500 monks and 20,000 nuns.

Abbot Rossiter, aged 64, a Londoner, became a Benedictine monk at the age of 18.

He was elected pro-primate at a meeting of 21 presidents of Benedictine congregations around the world. He succeeds Abbot Jerome Theisen, an American, who died of a heart attack, aged 65. He has been abbot president of the English Benedictine Congregation since 1991, and was abbot of Ealing Abbey in London for 24 years.

The most prominent Benedictine in England is Cardinal Basil Hume, the former abbot of the order's largest and most famous monastery in Britain, Ampleforth in North Yorkshire.

Ministers clash over lottery

Patrick Wintour

WILLIAM WALDEGRAVE, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, is seeking to renege on a repeated government pledge that cash from the National Lottery will never be used to fund existing government programmes, a confidential letter to him from the National Heritage Secretary, Virginia Bottomley, reveals.

Mr Waldegrave's efforts to use National Lottery cash to fund government programmes has provoked a clash with Mrs Bottomley, who warns him in the letter that his plan "would represent the clearest possible broken promise".

The row underlines the scale of the battle between the Treasury and the spending departments in the run-up to the Budget. It is the first sign that Treasury ministers have succumbed to the temptation to use the National Lottery bonanza to fund core government spending commitments.

Ministers, including the Prime Minister, have repeatedly guaranteed that the National Lottery will only be an additional source of money for schemes that might otherwise never be started. The money would not replace other government spending.

However, a letter leaked to Chris Smith, the shadow national heritage secretary, reveals Mrs Bottomley is fighting the Treasury to prevent the Exchequer using lottery cash to fund the National Heritage Department's £300 million arts programme.

In her letter written last month ago, Mrs Bottomley responds to Mr Waldegrave's suggestion that "endowments be given to major arts organisations in substitution for the revenue funding they receive from the Arts Council".

She writes: "This option is not a runner. It would contradict the many assurances we have given that lottery money would not be used to relieve the Government of its existing obligations. This commitment has been repeatedly given by members of the Government from the Prime Minister downwards. The Opposition would milk the broken promises theme for everything they can get."

Mr Waldegrave had been proposing that National Lottery cash be used to set up endowments, or trusts, from which any annual interest be used to fund arts programmes currently funded by the Government. Critics claim such a funding system makes the beneficiaries of lottery money no longer dependent on a stable source of income, such as taxation, but instead on the unpredictable whims of lottery income.

The leak of the letter came at an awkward time for Mrs Bottomley. She had planned to use her Tory conference address on Tuesday as an opportunity to reassure the public about the distribution of lottery cash.

● John Major on Monday warned an already-unsettled Conservative conference that, if his government is to produce the tax cuts for which party activists are clamouring, it must first act "ruthlessly" over public expenditure priorities.

Insisting that New Labour still looks to the state to provide solutions, the prime minister said that he hopes to make Britain "the unrivalled Enterprise Centre for Europe.

"Enterprise requires incentives, it requires proper rewards. So we must cut taxes when we can because lower taxes promote enterprise. To cut taxes we must lower spending. This means ruthlessly setting our priorities," said Mr Major.

That will please the Tory right, but depress its centre-left critics. The former prime minister, Sir Edward Heath, said: "I'm afraid there is a part of our party which has got an absolute mania about tax cuts."

Former PM dies at 92

OBITUARY
Lord Home of the Hirsel

LORD HOME of the Hirsel, the last of a long line of aristocratic British prime ministers, died on Sunday, aged 92, as Conservative activists gathered on the same Blackpool seafront where a dramatic party conference delivered him the leadership 32 years ago.

John Major led all-party tributes to his integrity, courtesy and soft-spoken patriotism. He was "understated and often underestimated", he said, well aware of ready comparisons with a predecessor who also faced a dynamic new Opposition leader after a long period of Tory rule — and lost to Harold Wilson.

In the course of a long public career which included the fateful negotiations with Hitler at Munich in 1938, Lord Home was twice an MP, twice a peer, and twice foreign secretary — before and after renouncing his earldom to become plain Sir Alec Douglas-Home, eligible to sit in the Commons again.

Lord Home of the Hirsel in 1973

Heir to a clutch of ancient Scottish titles, Lord Home was a figure from a bygone age, even in 1963 when Harold Macmillan suddenly resigned the premiership through ill health on the eve of the Blackpool conference.

Unencumbered by internal party democracy the Tory grandees, later dubbed "the magic circle", chose him as their compromise candidate.

But in the first wave of satire, his "grouse moor image" quickly became an easy butt for Harold Wilson's modernisers. Narrowly defeated in 1964, he quickly stepped down, opening the way for Edward Heath to win the first Tory leadership contest.

After 1974 Lord Home increasingly retired to his 30,000-acre Berwickshire estate with his beloved wife, Elizabeth, who died in 1990.

Sir Edward Heath called him "intensely loyal", much trusted abroad. Another ex-premier, Lord Callaghan, expressed the widely-held view that Lord Home preferred foreign affairs.

John Ezard adds: Lord Home went to the great matchbox in the sky leaving memories of a prime ministership so brief and long ago that few even knew of his once-celebrated confession that he used matches to understand economics.

Reactions to his passing varied in tone. Lord Hailsham, aged 88, whom he beat in the 1963 battle for Downing Street, said he had not been the same since his wife Elizabeth died in 1990.

"He was 92 and I suppose it was a release. They were both devout Christians and I can only think that he has gone to join her in Paradise."

Willie Rushton, the satirists' candidate in the 1963 Kinross and Perthshire byelection won by Home, said: "He was probably the first prime minister not to wear a waistcoat.

"I remember seeing him outside Number 10 and suddenly it dawned on me — look, shirtfront! When I was young, prime ministers used to come on Movietone News in wing collars and the whole cinema audience would stand up."

Lord Home's tone could be unsuspectedly sharp. He said of Hitler: "He walked like an ape, with his arms by his side." On the day he was forced to resign the Conservative leadership he became one of the few to best Harold Wilson at the Despatch Box.

Wilson, as prime minister, left himself open by snapping during Question Time: "I do wish you would learn to behave like a leader of the opposition."

Home had merely to reply: "I do wish you would learn to behave like a prime minister."

Michael White

Lord Home (Alexander Frederick Douglas-Home) politician, born July 2, 1903; died October 9, 1995

BBC to log pressure from political parties

Andrew Culf

ATTEMPTS by spin doctors and politicians to manipulate television news coverage are to be countered by an internal BBC monitoring exercise.

Tony Hall, managing director of BBC News and Current Affairs, described increasing political pressure on the corporation as "intimidatory and sometimes abusive".

Staff working on the BBC's flagship programmes, including Today and Newsnight, news bulletins and political output from Westminster, have been told to log complaints and pressure from party officials and politicians.

The system was set up by Mr Hall before the row last week between the BBC and Labour over coverage of Tony Blair's Brighton conference speech. Alastair Campbell, Mr Blair's press secretary, had sent a fax to John Birt, the BBC's director general, urging the corporation to lead its bulletins on the speech rather than the O J Simpson verdict, an intervention which Mr Birt later described as "crass and inappropriate".

The BBC's internal log will be reviewed each week by Mr Hall and one of his senior executives to see if any action needs to be taken.

"There has been a lot of pressure over the last two weeks from all parties, particularly over the last week from Labour," Mr Hall said. Pressure at conference time and before a general election was a fact of life.

"There is nothing wrong with politicians seeking to influence or give information to journalists, but it gets wrong when it is over-pushy. There is too much of it and it is deliberately manipulative."

He objected to attempts to influence the running order of bulletins and spin doctors seeking to know how a story was being headlined or developed.

Frank Dobson, the shadow environment secretary, defended Mr Campbell's fax, saying Mr Birt received representations from Tories practically every day: "I have never heard him describe that as crass. I would like to make a positive suggestion. Will John Birt log all the representations he receives from all political parties, and publish them monthly?"

● Michael Dobbs, a former Conservative Party deputy chairman, has demanded that the BBC makes one final cut to its adaptation of his latest thriller — removing his name from the credits.

The BBC said it had reluctantly bowed to the request after rejecting complaints from Mr Dobbs that scenes showing the state funeral of Baroness Thatcher in the opening episode were in appalling taste.

Lewis piece . . . each one is worth more than £1 million

Islanders in chess battle

Alex Bellos

HEBRIDEAN councillors are making an attacking move in the battle to keep the Lewis Chessmen, the world's most expensive chess set.

The 840-year-old Norse pieces, hand-carved from walrus tusk and unearthed by a cow on the Scottish island in 1831, are at the centre of a tug-of-war between the Western Isles council and the British Museum.

The 67 pieces, estimated to be worth more than £1 million each, are coming to the end of a three-month loan to the Western Isles Museum in Stornoway, but a cross-party alliance of councillors is seeking legal opinion on the museum's title.

Independent councillor Alasdair Nicholson said there had been dialogue with the British Museum for several months. He added: "There is no reason why this cultural colonialism should continue, with the pieces locked away in the back vaults of the museum in London."

The exhibition of the chessmen has attracted record numbers of visitors — 15,000 on an island with a population of 30,000 — and lured top chess players to the island in July for an international chess festival. British grandmaster Nigel Short has sent a message of support to the islanders' campaign.

The 12th century chess pieces, unearthed on a beach at Uig, may have belonged to a Norse merchant who hid them at a time of danger.

The 67 pieces were sold by a local man to a dealer, and then to the British Museum, although some accompanying pieces were passed to the National Museum of Scotland.

Police win battle for a British 'FBI'

Duncan Campbell

BRITAIN is set to have a fully operational national police force for the first time. Senior police officers are to meet in closed session this week to hammer out the details of the force, which will be similar to the FBI in the United States.

The decision comes after years of debate, with a growing number of senior officers arguing that Britain needs a new operational arm to counter the increase of organised crime. It also comes as the security service MI5 has been attempting to expand its role into traditional policing areas and will be seen as a sign that the police are to maintain primacy in organised crime.

Senior officers have been discussing over the past few months how the force would operate. The Association of Chief Police Officers is to finalise its proposals at its autumn conference in Coventry this week.

The new force will incorporate the existing National Criminal Intelligence Service (NCIS) and the six regional crime squads, with a national co-ordinating office based in London. The NCIS already gathers intelligence on major crime but its officers do not carry out arrests or undertake mobile surveillance, a source of increasing frustration to them.

Seven or eight of the 43 chief constables in England and Wales have opposed the force. They feel it will further undermine the local base of policing and are opposed to what they see as increased centralisation of the service.

The Commissioner of the Metropolitan police, Sir Paul Condon, said in a speech to the Police Foundation last month that the only way to counter organised crime was through a national force which would work with the security services, Customs and Excise and the Inland Revenue.

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In the pipeline . . . rust is attacking the Lloyd's building in London

Lloyd's fights to stop the rot

Angella Johnson

RUST is eating away at the external pipework of the Lloyd's building in the City of London, nine years after the modern architectural landmark was completed.

Severe corrosion is attacking the mass of service pipes on the award-winning structure, raising the possibility of legal action against the designer Sir Richard Rogers. Emergency inspection work has begun behind shrouded scaffolding to determine the cause of the corrosion.

Legal action could target Richard Rogers Partnership, consulting engineer Ove Arup & Partners and several contractors who worked on the project.

Nick Phillips, Lloyd's general manager (property), said: "The corrosion has been found in the external service ducts which are cocooned in insulation and stainless steel cladding."

Work has begun to replace the hot water pipes where the worst rusting has been discovered. Further exploration will be made of the cold water pipes and air conditioning pipes which are also corroded.

Mr Phillips said Lloyd's was determined to recover the cost. He refused to say how much it might be, but added, "Like everything else in the City it's not cheap."

Martin White, company secretary for Richard Rogers Partnership, said he was unaware of any threatened legal action and insisted that the corrosion was not a design fault.

The building — referred to by some as the Espresso Machine — cost about £187 million and has been plagued by a series of problems since its completion in 1986. While modernists enthused about its intestinal exterior, underwriters complained about poor access, heavy doors, low ceilings and a colour scheme described by one insider as "calculated to cause depression". In 1988, Lloyd's brought in Fitch & Co, interior design consultants, to suggest improvements.

Sir Richard was keen to be included in this review. Together their proposals ran to tens of millions of pounds. Only minor alterations were made.

The building houses a 10-storey insurance market. It was designed to create large, unobstructed floors on the interior and to allow maintenance to be carried out without causing disruption. The annual costs run into millions as the stainless steel exterior requires constant cleaning.

Cabinet split over Howard's race plan

Alan Travis

GILLIAN SHEPHARD is blocking plans by Michael Howard, the Home Secretary, to introduce criminal sanctions against employers of illegal immigrants because they are potentially racist, according to leaked cabinet correspondence.

She warns that the plan to fine employers who hire illegal immigrants will lead to companies being even less ready to recruit ethnic minority staff.

Mrs Shephard, the Education and Employment Secretary, also implies that the sanctions may be out of all proportion to the scale of illegal immigrants working in Britain.

The disclosure of the cabinet letters proved a severe embarrassment to Mr Howard, who is already under attack from opposition politicians for planning to play the race card.

Mr Howard had been hoping to announce the measures during his law and order speech to the Tory party conference this week.

The disclosure of the extent of Mrs Shephard's hostility is contained in a letter written by her last week. Her criticism is also backed by a separate written warning, dated September 22, from the Lord Chancellor, Lord Mackay, to Mr Howard that new Treasury money must be found to meet the legal costs of taking employers to court if the measure becomes law in the next parliamentary session.

Mrs Shephard reveals that Mr Howard has already been forced to drop proposals for a system of immigration checks after warnings of its effects from business organisations.

The Institute of Directors, the Confederation of British Industry and the British Association of Chambers of Commerce all expressed alarm that Mr Howard was still considering such a scheme.

Mrs Shephard agrees with the principle of deterring illegal immigrants. "I welcome the changes you have made to the proposals and I am in agreement with the principle of deterring illegal working," she says. "I do, however, have some concerns."

The most damaging of those concerns centres on the effect of criminal sanctions on the employment prospects of ethnic minority candidates. "In your letter you mention the sensitive position with respect to ethnic minorities," she says.

"There is a danger that employers will concentrate checks on prospective employees whom they see as a risk, if not simply exclude them from consideration for the job. Either way there could be racial discrimination or in some cases discrimination against EC nationals, contrary to the treaty. You suggest that this problem is not insuperable. I therefore wonder what detailed consideration you have given to this issue."

Mr Howard's proposals were to be introduced in the Queen's Speech next month, alongside measures to cut benefit payments to asylum seekers, abolish their rights to oral appeals and introduce a system of checks by headteachers, hospital administrators and other public officials on the status of suspected illegals.

Jack Straw, the shadow Home Secretary, gave his most explicit warning yet of the danger of Mr Howard playing the race card: "There can be no compromise with racism," he said.

"Many of us here are the children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren of immigrants. I'm one. You, Michael Howard, are another. That's why it is so disgraceful of you, and the Tory party to play the race card."

● A more lenient approach to "have-a-go heroes" who confront criminals in their homes was signalled by Mr Howard last week. He said that in future in most self-defence cases he expects police to use their discretion and not arrest and charge the householder before consulting the Crown Prosecution Service on the chance of a conviction.

In Brief

IMMIGRANT groups condemned a landmark High Court judgment that homeless immigrants from the European Union had no right to housing even if they fell seriously ill.

ROLLERBLADERS were banned from two of London's royal parks after the inquest on a cyclist who was killed when he collided with a rollerblader in July.

THE Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey, in Khartoum lambasted the Sudan's Muslim authorities for what he called their unequal treatment of Christians.

THE AVERAGE solicitor's advice on consumer law is less reliable than the average washing machine, according to the Consumers Association.

JOHN CAIRNCROSS, the Fifth Man in the notorious Cambridge University-dominated spy ring which passed secrets to the Soviet Union, has died, aged 82.

WOMEN'S groups condemned a judge who told a sex attacker he would have been forgiven by his victim had he apologised and sent her a bunch of flowers.

MICHAEL Portillo, the Defence Secretary, is embroiled in an EU dispute inside his ministry over plans to ditch the British-made Land Rover for a "gold-plated" Austrian equivalent costing nearly twice as much for its fleet of 700 army ambulances.

THE Blairite leadership of the National Union of Students disbanded its leftwing London area organisation amid allegations of misappropriated funds.

AN elderly British couple holidaying in Morocco were shot dead in their hotel bar, allegedly by a policeman who had earlier shot his wife.

DAVID OMAND, a Ministry of Defence official, is to take over as director of GCHQ, the Government's eavesdropping centre based in Cheltenham.

A HOME OFFICE country assessment report, used by immigration officials considering the cases of Nigerian asylum seekers, is "deeply flawed and acutely distorted", the British Refugee Council says.

TWENTY 250-year-old oak trees in Windsor Great Park are to be saved following "public concern". The trees have been occupied for a month by protesters after eight ancient oaks and 63 others were cut down on the orders of the Duke of Edinburgh, the park's head ranger.

'Top brass' campaign to oust gays from forces

Owen Bowcott

A LEAKED Royal Navy memorandum has revealed an internal campaign by senior officers to prevent the Government allowing homosexuals to serve in the armed forces.

The letter, signed by Sir Hugo White, Commander in Chief of the Fleet, and circulated among senior officers within the last two months, exposes a concerted attempt to influence the outcome of the Ministry of Defence's review of the controversy.

The legal battle by four gay ex-servicemen and women to have their discharges overturned — which prompted the Government to announce it would re-examine the ban — resumed in the Court of Appeal on Monday.

In the memorandum, dated August 2, Sir Hugo refers to a "recent discreet survey on homosexual tolerance in the Fleet". He writes: "One of the views which emerged is that Top Brass do not appear to be fighting the corner and there is growing acceptance of eventual relaxation of the rules. This is emphatically not the case.

"As in all battles timing is essential and I know the Chiefs of Staff not only intend, but are vigorously defending the status quo, and we are determined to act in the most effective way at the optimum moment to do so. I would ask you to discourage any self-defeatist view that we shall eventually lose our case."

Stonewall, the gay civil rights group, claimed the letter showed the Ministry of Defence's review was prejudicial and not impartial as had been promised. "It's shocking," a spokeswoman said. "They are trying to pre-empt the inquiry."

A ministry spokesman did not dispute the letter's authenticity but insisted any decision on whether homosexuals would be allowed to stay in the services would be made only by the Armed Forces Select Committee early next year.

Under current regulations homosexuals are forcibly discharged from the armed services. About 250 people have been sacked because of the ban in the past four years. At least four RAF air crew, whose training is estimated to have cost the Ministry of Defence millions of pounds, have been dismissed in the past few weeks.

NHS trust lost £3.5 million

David Brindle

A LEADING hospital trust has lost at least £3.5 million on a business venture with an outside company, fuelling concern over trust freedoms and the Government's drive to force the health service to seek private-sector funding for any development scheme.

All the directors and senior managers involved in the failed venture have resigned or left the trust, the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital in Stanmore, Middlesex. One has been dismissed.

Questions are certain to be raised about whether the trust acted beyond its powers when it entered the venture — to build and run an incinerator to burn clinical waste from hospitals throughout the South-east.

Robin Field, the trust's new chairman, said: "I don't think there is a question that the trust has acted outside its powers."

The news is acutely embarrassing for ministers, coming ahead of an expected announcement on plans for privately financed NHS hospitals in Norwich, Swindon and Durham. In Stonehaven, near Aberdeen, the private sector may not only build, but also staff a new unit.

The RNOH, a world-famous hospital and one of the first trusts set up in 1991, formed the joint venture with Motherwell Bridge Envirotech and created a company called RNOH Incinerator Services.

The incinerator, designed to burn more than two tonnes of clinical waste an hour and generate heat for the hospital, was supposed to make a profit. However, it was shut down in April this year after losing up to £300,000 a year. New environmental regulations would demand modifications costing £1.5 million.

The trust's annual accounts show £3.5 million losses on disposal of the incinerator, comprising £1.8 million written off on plant and equipment, £655,000 for bad debt, £12,000 for redundancies, £406,000 for "expert advice" and £600,000 for "provision for litigation".

Mr Field said: "The lesson is that when we embark upon income-generation schemes, we have to be very careful that they are things we know about."

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Blair offers vision of New Britain

Michael White

TONY BLAIR last week gave an evangelical urgency to his vision of a Britain transformed by the healing policies of New Labour from an old and divided society into a "young country" again.

Reaching out beyond a packed Brighton conference centre to what he called the "decent, good, patriotic" majority, the Labour leader underpinned rhetorical uplift with a series of specific policy initiatives.

Though he went further than before in pledging a Labour government to retain a publicly owned railway, his boldest stroke was to reveal that shadow ministers have negotiated an understanding with British Telecom to open the telecommunications market to "free and fair" competition from 2002.

But the specific proposals made up only one strand of an hour-long speech which touched more emotional buttons. The Labour leader used part of his address to reassure the party faithful that New Labour would be true to its bedrock values, describing socialism as not just about economics or politics but "how I try to live my life, how you try to live yours". His words appeared to win over many of the older Labour persuasion.

Mr Blair made light of his internal battles. "Last year I was Bambi, this year I am Stalin: from Disneyland to dictatorship in 12 short months."

Deftly shifting his focus from New Labour to New Britain, he suggested that the country was weighed down by its past and divided by an unfair class system, a tattered social fabric and dogmatic politics. He looked forward to "a nation for all the people, built by all the people. Old divisions cast out. A new spirit in the nation. Working together. Unity. Solidarity. Partnership. One Britain."

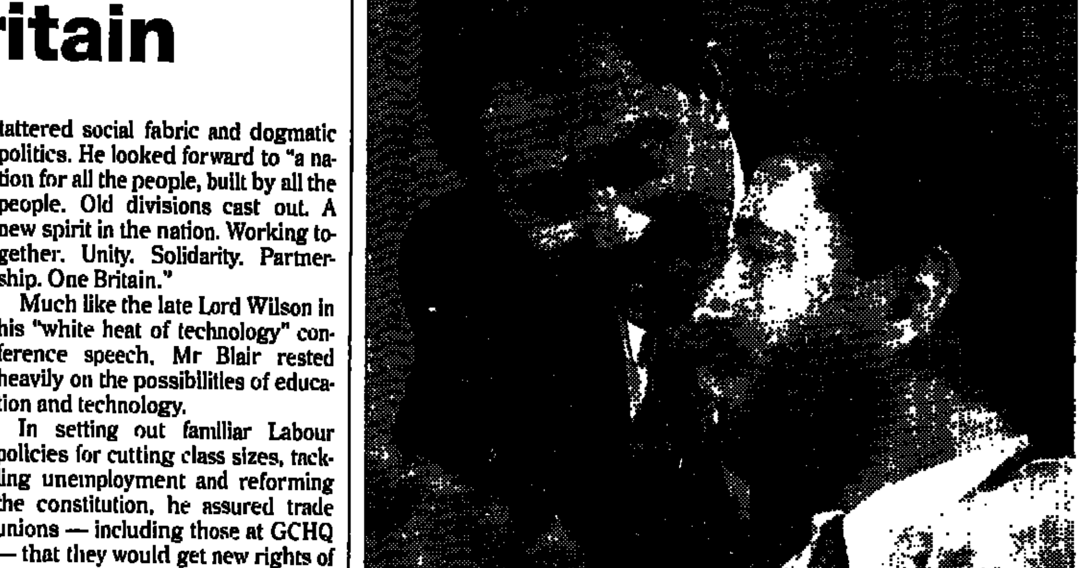
Much like the late Lord Wilson in his "white heat of technology" conference speech, Mr Blair rested heavily on the possibilities of education and technology.

In setting out familiar Labour policies for cutting class sizes, tackling unemployment and reforming the constitution, he assured trade unions — including those at GCHQ — that they would get new rights of recognition plus the social chapter, but no return to the old days.

And in a significant move on rail privatisation he said: "To anyone thinking of grabbing our railways . . . so they can make a quick profit as our network is broken up and sold off, I say this — there will be a publicly owned and publicly accountable railway system under a Labour government."

Mr Blair's climax was an appeal to national unity to "make this the young country of my generation's dreams". He added: "Let us say with pride, we are patriots, this is the patriotic party. Because it is the people's party. As the Tories wave their Union Jacks next week I know what so many people will be thinking: 'It's no good waving the fabric of our flag when you have spent 16 years tearing apart the fabric of our nation'."

Rebecca Smithers adds: John Prescott sent party members home from Brighton with a clear message that New Labour is ready for government and that the real battle to win the general election starts now.



Tony Blair talking to David Blunkett on the conference platform before the education debate PHOTOGRAPH: KEVIN COOMBS

In a rousing speech that drew him a standing ovation, the Labour deputy leader appeared to bury any differences with Tony Blair, praising the leader who had "so inspired, so enthused, so electrified this party and this country in the best conference I can ever remember".

He taunted the Tories as a "squalid, sleazy, sordid government", and a party which was a "divided shambles". He made John Major and Michael Heseltine the main butt of many jokes describing Mr Heseltine as "the Kama Sutra of the Tory party. He's been in every position except Number 10."

Paying tribute to members for their success in recruiting more than 100,000 new members to the party through the Rolling Rose campaign, Mr Prescott stressed that was just the first step.

"We've got to keep growing and we've got to keep sharpening our organisation," he said, "because we don't win elections on policies alone, we win because of the strength, the commitment of our movement and our party at the grass roots."

Labour was a party that spoke for the whole of the country, and would govern for the whole of the country.

"With every day that passes under this dying, dishonest, disaster of a government we are getting closer to the day when Tony Blair forms a Labour government that will create that new Britain. Ready for government? Of course we're ready for government! John Major, stand aside . . . we're on our way."

Hattersley in class divide

THE former Labour deputy leader Roy Hattersley dramatically intensified his crusade for the outright abolition of grant-maintained schools, chastising the Labour leadership for being apologetic about comprehensive education.

In his first speech from the floor for more than 20 years, he incensed the party leadership and won a standing ovation from many constituency delegates, some of whom used the debate to criticise Tony Blair for sending his son Euan to a grant-maintained school.

However, to the delight of the shadow education secretary, David Blunkett, who has tried to craft a compromise on the future of grant-maintained schools, the conference voted down a motion demanding outright abolition by 76.4 per cent to 23.6 per cent.

Leadership fears that the careful balancing act on electoral reform would be undone proved unfounded when delegates voted heavily, on a show of hands, to retain the party's commitment to a referendum.

The conference rounded off a week of resolute moderation by resisting its usual temptation to vote for unilateral renunciation of the Trident nuclear fleet as part of a sharp reduction in defence spending. A unilateralist motion was defeated by 55.8 to 44.2 per cent, the reverse of its 1993 and 1994 votes.

Instead, a multilateralist motion was passed amid angry condemnation of France's resumed nuclear testing and a moderate motion passed on the need to control the arms trade.

Daring spirit who moved a conference

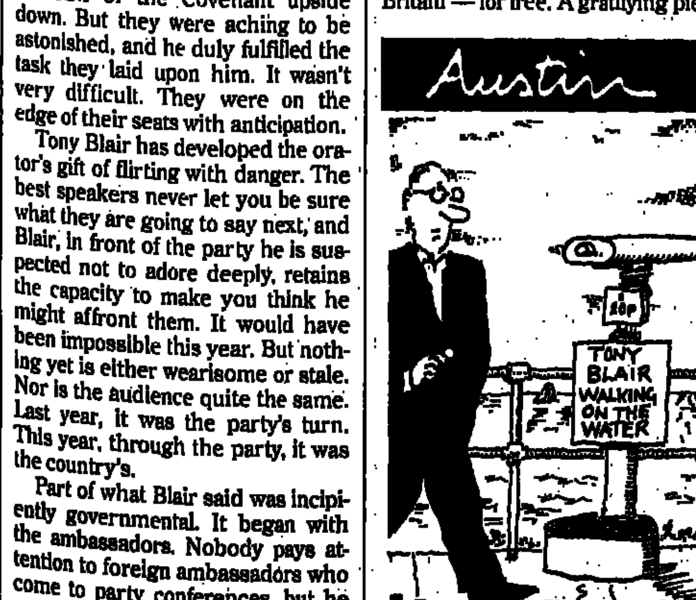
COMMENT
Hugo Young

FIVE thousand souls were in the hall and every face was shining bright. The Labour Party has never shown such an undivided air of expectation. No trace of sourness darkened the scene, no secret wish that the leader should make a mess of his second annual exercise in stylised grandiloquence. Everyone knew there couldn't be a coup like last year's when he turned the Ark of the Covenant upside down. But they were aching to be astonished, and he duly fulfilled the task they laid upon him. It wasn't very difficult. They were on the edge of their seats with anticipation.

Tony Blair has developed the orator's gift of flirting with danger. The best speakers never let you be sure what they are going to say next, and Blair, in front of the party he is suspected not to adore deeply, retains the capacity to make you think he might affront them. It would have been impossible this year. But nothing yet is either wearisome or stale. Nor is the audience quite the same. Last year, it was the party's turn. This year, through the party, it was the country's.

Part of what Blair said was incipiently governmental. It began with the ambassadors. Nobody pays attention to foreign ambassadors who come to party conferences, but he signalled their presence as emissaries to the government-in-waiting. It was a seigneural opening touch. In his drawing room, he talks like a man who sincerely believes that winning the election may be impossible. At the rostrum he took Labour a large stage towards engrossing his people in the virtual reality of occupying the seats of power.

He talks as though he'd personally cut a deal with BT, to get it to link its new networks to just about every public-service building in Britain — for free. A gratifying piece of presumption. In a different part of the forest, he slipped in, half drowned under applause for something else, a commitment to a referendum on the voting system, which has all the virtues of populist appeal without, yet, pledging his cabinet to take a position.



He also said, unless I missed a subtext, that Labour would renationalise the railways if they had to. Supported by the commitment not to promise a single tiny promise he couldn't deliver, this was a large adjustment. Like his defence of a vibrant trade union connection, it was pleasing to the audience, the most concrete assertion, among vast tracts of inspirational "vision", that what makes Labour distinctive is, contrary to the conspiracy-frenzy of the hyperventilating Tory press, something that the party is proud of.

The party, yes. But what about the country? The links between the two was now the message Blair strained every rhetorical device to affirm. It was the heart of his speech, the claim he's made from the beginning of his Clause 4 campaign, telling the party it had to be the spokesman for the country, not the preacher to it. He put that side of it again last week, ramming home the truth about the party's dead past. We called them "our people" while forgetting who they were. Re-education continued to be apparent in his unflinching defence of the family, against the perversion of liberal values that used to talk it down. That part of the exercise has not stopped. The party is still being dragged into alignment with Middle England. Last week, gasping with helpless admiration, it showed every sign of being grateful for the experience.

But that is no longer the point. Now comes the other half. And compared with modernising the Labour party, the modernisation of Britain is the real labour of Hercules. The leader made a gallant effort last week to begin the process. If words could change the world, the revolution has begun. He most passionately wants to make this ancient country into a young country, to which end he deployed a rhetorical device and talked it into the ground. Saying Britain is young, even a dozen times an hour, is a necessary but hardly sufficient condition of its being so.

Some of the words made a connection. I began by describing this as an audience of souls advisedly, for Mr Blair is the only politician in Britain who not only talks about the soul but sounds as though he believes he has one. For a country that is aware of a crisis of spiritual barrenness, he would be a timely leader. In the same way, he's becoming the only leader who talks convincingly about technology. The long passage he devoted to the modernisation of education came from the heart of a man who has grasped better than any minister the shape of the future for any country which calls itself serious about the modern world.

A young country also needs a new constitution, and he made the right links with that as well. Nobody who has witnessed the breakdown of political accountability in the last decade could doubt that the old structures and systems have run their course. They are part of a national malaise that runs very deep. This malaise is rooted in a view of the past that sustains Conservatism. Proposing Labour's package of changes to the constitutional system, Blair saw them as a challenge to British cynicism. Speaking for his generation, he implored the country to regard itself in an entirely different way. He even thought he could see this new country appearing as he spoke. "Feel new Britain come alive. Feel the vitality that can course through this country's veins and make it young again."

This is magnificent. But the British constitution has its own Clause 4, which subsumes a monarchy, an apparatus of state and class, a worship of the past, a proud insularity, a complacency about all things that are and for ever have been British. The modern Labour party noticeably lacks much belief in this unspoken, unwritten art of the British constitution. The genuine pulse of reform beats through it. In its attitudes to Britain it is becoming far less conservative than the party of Wilson or Kinnock. But one only has to hear what Blair is looking for, as proof that this country is young, to see that the project of Britain's first one-nation socialist is just beginning.

A man in despair shocks the Tories

IN THE whole of the 20th century more than 200 Members of Parliament have changed their party allegiance in some way, for all sorts of reasons and with a wide variety of consequences. The examples range in importance from Winston Churchill at one extreme to John Stonehouse at the other. Yet in all those 95 years the first time that a sitting Conservative MP made the switch from Tory to Labour was on Saturday October 7, 1995. Alan Howarth's move is therefore an astonishing political first. But in the long run does it tell us that Mr Howarth is an extraordinary man or that we live in extraordinary times? A bit of both, is the right answer. The man would not have moved without the times. The new Labour MP for Stratford-upon-Avon has become an increasingly eloquent critic of his former party. He has made some of the best informed and principled backbench Commons speeches from any side during the past year, notably on the jobseekers' bill but also on arms sales and penal policy. A series of articles have marked Mr Howarth out as one of the most troubled consciences in his party over a whole range of government policies and priorities. He has made little secret of his disgust at the party's headlong move to the right and, although he voted for John Major in July, he has often expressed his distaste for the Prime Minister's appeasement of the right over Europe and social policy. The speech which he was to have made at Blackpool this week is the speech of a man who genuinely despairs that the "one nation" Conservatism of social cohesion, the legitimate state and liberal principles can ever again hold the party together in the face of the individualist right's ascendancy.

Even so, it is one thing to criticise your party and another to leave it. It is yet another thing altogether to join your party's principal historic adversaries so dramatically and with such vicious timing. Mr Howarth's switch is both audacious and reckless. It is the brave decision of a principled man, but it is also the uncertain lunge of a man in a crisis. Mr Howarth suggests that there are 30 to 40 other discontented "one nation" Tories in the ranks at Westminster. Perhaps there are. It would nevertheless be amazing if any of them were to follow Mr Howarth's example; although last week we would all have said the same about Mr Howarth. If any prominent Tory is likely to follow in Mr Howarth's footsteps he may probably be found in the Governor's residence in Hong Kong. The move will devastate the Conservatives, at least for long enough to destabilise this week's conference, dismay the Liberal Democrats, who have been completely sidelined in the drama, and it will, of course, delight Labour. Labour is right to give Mr Howarth a home. It should be proud to have persuaded such a distinguished and progressive politician to join its ranks. There will be some people in the party who will be churlish about Mr Howarth's conversion to the cause, but most Labour people ought to see this event as the sign that it is. In many ways Mr Howarth is untypical of the kind of disgruntled Tories whom Labour is trying to convince. But he is proof positive of two things: first, that Tony Blair's Labour party could be redrawing the political map in favour of the centre-left for a generation; and, second, that the Conservative party may be on the eve of a disintegration of which no one alive has any experience.

American justice left in tatters

WAS it bought? Would a poor unemployed black man have received the same verdict? Was this a triumph of lawyers over justice? The questions in the wake of the "not guilty" verdict in the O J Simpson trial are unending.

Commentators who believe the trial was hijacked by the 17 lawyers on the Simpson defence team will have a field day. The murders did become a sideshow compared with the racism of the Los Angeles police exposed by the defence team. The racism revealed was ugly, unacceptable and a threat to civilised society. The jury may therefore have accepted the invitation of Simpson's lawyers to place such racism above the killings they were called to address. If so, they were wrong. Criminal trials should not be turned into a referendum on the behaviour of the police — even a police service as racist as LA's.

The jury, however, may have genuinely decided that the case remained unproven. Ironically, the public heard how some LA police officers would plant evidence, torture suspects, beat up black offenders but most of this evidence was ruled inadmissible and never put before the jury. To most outside observers, the evidence presented in court by the prosecution looked overwhelming. Moreover, the 12 jury members are bound to be condemned for the speed with which they reached their decision: less than four hours after a trial which lasted nine months, involved 1,100 pieces of evidence, and 50,000 pages of transcript. Yet if they had turned in a guilty verdict with equal speed, they may well have been congratulated for cutting through the legal twaddle. Length of deliberations should not be the criterion by which jury verdicts are judged.

Even so, the suspicion remains that it was only the breadth and depth of the Simpson legal team that won the "not guilty" verdict. Juries are not selected to solve social problems but are there to ensure the criminal justice system retains public trust. Last week's decision will only further undermine the current system of justice in America. Even before the verdict, American justice had emerged in tatters from this most-watched trial in the history of criminal justice: the number of lawyers involved, the length of time they spun it out, the obfuscation, the trials within trials over admissible evidence, the lack of judicial control, media campaigns waged by lawyers, and the cost. The whole world has been watching. It will not be impressed. Television helped expose the system's faults, but generated its own: playing to the camera. The Founding Fathers would be dismayed.

A fax to Havana

CUBA IS the big one for Bill Clinton — Bosnia is by comparison a piece of cake. His aims in former Yugoslavia may sometimes have been confused but US policy towards Cuba has operated in a world of total fantasy. Last week the president lifted a tiny corner of the senseless blanket cast over the unfortunate Cubans. The chief concession is that media and academic exchanges will be permitted. The details reveal all the old pettiness and paranoia. They define the terms on which fax machines may be used by such licence-holders to communicate between Cuba and the US. They grudgingly permit Cuban-Americans to visit their relatives on the island not more than once a year.

They permit Western Union to open an office in Havana — but only for the purchase of air tickets by those lucky enough to obtain US visas. Lest anyone suggests this is being soft on communism, Mr Clinton's advisers are at pains to explain that it is "both a loosening and strengthening" of the blockade. The strengthening includes a new surveillance operation in Mexico and other countries which offer direct flights to Cuba. Americans "carrying large sums of money" will be specially targeted in case they are heading for Havana. These disclaimers are not enough to convince those long-time Cuban exiles who maintain that Mr Clinton is a "pacifist" seeking accommodation with Fidel Castro. Recent moves in the House of Representatives to tighten sanctions suggest there will be problems there too. The White House says there is absolutely no intention of improving relations between the US and Cuban governments. The big idea is to encourage more "independence and political activity" among non-government Cubans to help prepare the country for "the eventual arrival of democracy". Instead of the exploding cigar once favoured by the CIA, Washington's new secret weapon is to be the incoming fax.

If this is a serious aim then the obvious question arises: why were such steps not taken years ago to "aerate Cuban society"? The White House interpretation is hardly likely to encourage Cuba to respond positively unless it knows something more than is on the surface. Perhaps this is really camouflage and Mr Clinton is seeking ways of reaching more normal relations with a regime that poses no conceivable threat to US interests. Perhaps there is concern in Washington that foreign interests are getting in there first. Perhaps it has been noticed that younger Cuban exiles are less rabidly anti-Castro. Perhaps the natural progression of life can be left to settle Mr Castro's future and that of Cuban politics. Perhaps the world's largest power can finally stop persecuting a small Caribbean neighbour. That would be news worth faxing to Havana.

Push for peace may carry a high price

Martin Woollacott

THE United States is bulldozing the way towards a settlement in former Yugoslavia, overcoming obstacles that seemed insuperable only a few months ago. In the process it has relegated the United Nations to a subordinate role, and reinvented Nato as an instrument of American power.

The US is consolidating itself as the dominant influence in the Balkans on the basis of serious military threats to Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Muslims and of meeting the needs of both Croatia and Serbia for a legitimation of some of their past actions, for economic aid and for a return to international respectability.

The momentum that the Americans have managed to create is bearing the parties along towards a ceasefire more likely to last than previous delusory arrangements, and towards a territorial agreement that might work if a large "peace implementation force" sat on it for a year or so after that. The American policy of "bigger sticks and bigger carrots" seems to be succeeding. The intensified efforts made to take territory in advance of the ceasefire date indicate that those who are fighting recognise that they may genuinely have to stop.

What is more, this is not just a Bosnian plan. The Americans are on the move throughout the Balkans, active on Macedonia and Kosovo, drawing in Greece and Bulgaria. It is an ambitious campaign. Everybody who has watched the enfeebled efforts of the outside powers in the past must welcome the appearance of a more coherent and more forceful US policy.

Yet there is undoubtedly a price to pay for the prize of a Balkan settlement as the Americans envisage it, and it is a high one. In the region itself, settlement on US lines means rescuing Slobodan Milosevic from a defeat that might well otherwise have led to his fall from power. It means reinforcing the unhealthy dominance of Franjo Tudjman and his party in Croatia. It could mean that either Ratko Mladic or Radovan Karadzic, and perhaps even both of them, will survive and continue to run a bloodstained regime in Serb-held Bosnia. And, while it means coercing all sides, it may well be that the really serious coercion will be that applied to the present Bosnian government and the mainly Muslim population of the area it controls.

As Richard Holbrooke has moved between capitals, he has carried with him a portfolio of military threats. Nato airpower has been repeatedly used against the Bosnian Serbs in pursuit of Holbrooke's warning in late August, before the market attack, that bombs would fall "if the peace initiative does not get moving — dramatically moving — in the next week or so". Serbia, too, faces the implied threat that US restraints on the Tudjman government could be let slip, and an attack on eastern Slavonia could follow. But the military threat has also been used in a more subtle way against the Bosnian government, as when the US persuaded Croatia to reduce its military efforts in north-west Bosnia.

The result was to leave the Bosnian forces on their own against the Serbs, who then began to recapture some government-held territory. Only the Croats have not yet been treated in this way. There is no clear military sanction that affects them and, so far, they have been asked to do nothing that they might not have wished to do anyway. The Bosnian government is being offered a carrot as well — the military training and assistance that the US has said it will provide during the implementation phase of a peace. The emphasis on arming the Bosnians has been such a feature of the political debate in the US that it must remain policy. But, in practice, US military assistance might amount more to control of Bosnia's military resources than anything else.

US policy takes advantage of the shifting strengths and vulnerabilities of the south Slav regimes. It uses and deals with Milosevic's plans to give himself a new lease of life as near-dictator of Serbia, with Tudjman's idea of himself as a great national leader and European statesman, with the divisions within the Bosnian government, and with the deep contradictions between the objectives of Sarajevo and those of Zagreb.

Some might therefore argue that it fights fire with fire, using ethnic nationalism to blunt the worse consequences of ethnic nationalism. But it can equally well be argued that no scheme for settlement that uses these forces can ever escape the danger of being upset by them.

The massive US intervention of recent months has, after all, been aimed at stopping the war just at the point when the Bosnian Serbs were beginning to lose it — when the combined Croatian and Bosnian forces could have inflicted further defeats on the Serbs and might have been able to induce a change of leadership in Pale, even in Belgrade.

WHAT its likely effects have in common is that they all tend to reinforce ethnic division. Tudjman, preparing for a quick lower-house election to cash in on his post-Krajina popularity, has just reduced Serbian representation from 12 to three seats, an action that speaks volumes on the question of the Serbs' right to return. In Serbia itself, the concentration of refugees produces a more and more predominantly Serbian society. In Bosnia, the processes of "ethnic cleansing" continue daily.

The Americans are hustling the parties through door after door. But the war could easily still go on. In particular, Croatia clearly reserves the right to attack eastern Slavonia if the region is not handed to it by agreement. If that were avoided, however, the optimistic scenario suggests that a more normal politics will eventually begin.

In Bosnia there is sometimes hopeful talk of a long-term approach to integration, in which the multi-ethnic ideal will come to prevail after many years. The pessimistic projection, on the other hand, is that the legacy of extreme nationalism and of one-party rule will not go away, leading to war or to increasing internal oppression, or both.

Once social and political damage of the kind inflicted on South Slav societies has been done, its effects cannot easily be reversed, particularly by policies which temporise with the very forces that did the damage in the first place.

UK backs World Bank's debt relief plan

Larry Elliott and Alex Brummer in Washington

BRITAIN is the first of the western industrial countries to support publicly a comprehensive plan to provide debt relief for the world's poorest countries.

In his address to the International Monetary Fund's policy-making interim committee on Sunday, Chancellor Kenneth Clarke said: "We need an exit strategy for those countries with unsustainable debt burdens."

The World Bank, under president James Wolfensohn, wants to establish a facility, largely funded by the World Bank's internal resources, to allow the poorest countries to write off debts to the IMF, World Bank and regional development banks.

The plan, first leaked last month, has been strongly welcomed by the aid pressure groups, including the key British charity Oxfam, which has often been in conflict with UK and World Bank development policies.

It is estimated that the countries most affected by multilateral debt owe $11 billion to the international financial institutions. Mr Clarke later told a press conference that it was his hope that substantial progress on this question could be made in time for the meeting of the IMF and the World Bank in April, 1996.

Earlier, finance ministers of the G7 nations ministers took an important step towards improving the ability of the IMF to respond to financial emergencies. They reached broad agreement on the need to double the IMF's borrowing capacity to $50 billion and are to intensify consultations with countries with high reserves in the aim of creating the improved facility by the end of 1996.

Mark Tran adds: The world economy will grow next year at its fastest since 1988 if the largest countries continue to co-operate on economic policies and currency stabilisation, the IMF said last week.

"We are in a very encouraging phase of the economic cycle," said Michael Camdessus, IMF managing director. His comments came after the fund's latest World Economic Outlook said that such co-operation was "contributing importantly to the favourable performance and prospects of most countries".

Mr Camdessus sounded a warning about aid to the world's poorest countries. Official development assistance had fallen below 0.3 per cent of GDP, well below the UN target of 0.7 per cent, he said. "I'm extremely worried: there is no reason to continue such trends and they must be corrected," he said.

In Brief

SHARES in TSB surged to a high on Monday on market hopes of a bidding war after Lloyds Bank and its UK rival announced plans to merge in a deal valued at £15 billion.

THE PRESIDENT, chairman and other top executives of the Daiwa Bank resigned in a widening scandal over concealed losses on bond deals by the bank's US arm.

RUSSIA is set to have its lowest grain harvest for 30 years, and the state faces problems supplying the army and the inhospitable northern territories because it has run out of cash to buy grain from farmers.

CHINA is to return to the international capital markets by raising up to $1 billion in the next few months as part of its programme to modernise its economy and become a powerful player in international trade.

AMSTRAD, the consumer electronics group created by Alan Sugar in 1969, has bounced back into the black, announcing full-year pre-tax profits of £3 million against last year's loss of £19.9 million.

ENGINEERING group GKN said that Italy's defence ministry has ordered 16 EH101 helicopters from Agusta, GKN's Italian partner in developing them. The deal is worth £150 million to GKN Westland.

COMPANIES making use of derivatives are being offered a "financial health check" by the Futures and Options Association to help tighten the market after the Barings and other high profile derivative disasters.

RTZ IS to reinforce its place as the world's biggest mining group following its decision to merge with the Australian firm CRA. The cash-free merger will pool assets totalling £4.5 billion under a single management. Assets will include gold, diamonds, silver, iron, tin, copper, coal and nuclear material.

Tories riding a cycle of decline

The British Conservatives are stuck in a cul-de-sac facing the wrong way, argues **Will Hutton**

THE Conservative party is in a hole — and there are no signs of its climbing out. It is wedded to a philosophy and programme that, far from improving the condition of the people, is now actively harming it, and its core purpose — to keep its opponents out of office — is no longer sufficient to keep its fissiparous tendencies under control.

Worse still, the enemies which helped unite it have evaporated. The enemy abroad has disappeared with the collapse of communism and the end of the cold war; the enemy at home has collapsed with the left's new desire to find non-statist ends to achieve its economic and social goals.

The Conservatives' dominance not just of the past 16 years but of British politics over most of this century makes it difficult to come to terms with how weak the party has now become.

It is locked into a philosophy and programme in which it is compelled to narrow the boundaries of British citizenship, enlarge the powers of the centre and weaken the quality of public provision, along with any conception of social justice, at the same time as arguing that it is supposedly improving choice, accountability and standards.

This fiction can no longer be sustained, as MP Alan Howarth's dramatic defection to Labour last weekend underlines.

The Conservative party's reasons for regarding tax cuts as its flagship policy are known to all. Voters may say in opinion polls that they want tax increases for improved public services, but the Conservatives know they don't really mean it; what they mean is that the taxes on somebody richer than themselves should increase.

But, as most polls report that nearly everybody regards themselves as on low or middle incomes, there are very few who regard themselves as rich enough to bear extra tax. Moreover, although people are prepared to back tax increases in abstract, in the particular they don't trust the state to spend their money well on their own behalf. Thus income tax cuts have become the policy totem which embodies an entire political philosophy. It is not just that lowering the standard rate is an effective electoral bribe; it stands for a belief in rolling back the state, of giving individuals their own money to make their own choices and promoting a lusty individualism.

But while all individuals may want to pay less tax, they do not wish to do so at any price. For the policy to be effective, the Government has to offer tax cuts as a free lunch, with no consequences for public services. Here its rhetoric no longer works. There is not a person in the country who does not know that Britain's public infrastructure and public services are shoddy, second-rate and deteriorating.

Nor is it true that the low taxation for which this is the excuse is the route to economic success. Britain's tax receipts, standing at 37.4 per cent of gross domestic product in 1995, are the lowest in Europe except for Greece — and only some 4 per cent of GDP above low-tax Japan. If it were true that low taxation was the guarantor of prosperity, Britain should now be growing like an Asian tiger.

It is not. Instead, the Government is locked in a grim struggle to find further public spending reductions to free up the resources for income tax cuts.

When Neil Kinnock was enjoying a 20 per cent opinion poll lead after the poll tax riots in 1990, the Conservatives authorised an 8 per cent increase (excluding the additional costs of the recession) in the control total for public spending over the two years up to the 1992 election.

In the two years up to 1997, the Government is committed to a tiny 1.5 per cent increase which, extraordinarily, it is trying to tighten even further. The point is being reached when the relationship between falling taxes and falling public services will be impossible to disguise.

PERHAPS more seriously, the fight to limit the growth of public spending has, paradoxically, led to an extensive centralisation of government power, as the entire public sector has been subjected to standardised rules and accounting demands made from the centre.

As the former editor of the Times, Simon Jenkins, argues powerfully in his forthcoming book*, the party of light government, in its detestation of the public sector, has become the champion of massive centralisation, thus undermining one of the principal objectives of the Conservative party. British democracy is being diminished, and all in the name of value-for-money tests, choice and audit trails.

A good example of the double-speak in action was last week's leak in the Guardian that the Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, is in favour of promoting vouchers for 16- to 19-year-olds which they can spend on their education as they choose. This is presented as a means of empowering individual students, so they can choose between colleges, which will have the happy by-product of making the colleges more accountable to their student "customers".

But that is just self-serving piffle behind which Mr Clarke's true aim masquerades. Vouchers are a means of standardising the cash spent on every 16- to 19-year-old in the country, so that relatively high-cost school sixth forms will have their budgets reduced to the same level as those of low-cost further education colleges.

One lean, mean centralised "Next Steps" executive agency will then be able to set one uniform rate per student across the country — and all in the name of choice and a penny off the standard rate of income tax! The Communist party could not have achieved so much, nor George Orwell parodied it better. Big Brother has been delivered from the part of the political spectrum from which it was least expected.

As Jenkins writes, this process has been at work everywhere, from the prison service to the vendetta against local authorities, and it has produced a crisis both of political legitimacy and of democracy.

But the Tories cannot escape from the process in which they are locked. Instead they have to blunder on, pretending that the crisis in political legitimacy is nothing to do with what they have set in train but comes from somewhere else.

This is one of the main engines driving the growth of Euroscepticism in the party. Brussels is replacing Moscow and the British Labour movement as the collectivist enemy from which the Conservatives must defend England. In robbing the Commons of its powers, Brussels is allegedly one of the main sources of centralisation and falling political legitimacy.

This is utter hokum, but also dangerous for the Conservative party itself. Withdrawal from the European Union, the logic of its position, is impossible without dividing the party, because a significant wing will not join in a policy it considers nationally destructive.

But this is where a party arrives, once its own ideology gets in the way of reality. The Conservative party is in a cul-de-sac of its own making. What it requires are honest politicians brave enough to tell the party what is happening and why. That there are none on offer is one more measure of the depth of its problems — and the inevitability of its losing office.

* Accountable to None: The Tory Nationalisation of Britain, by Simon Jenkins, Hamish Hamilton, £16.99

FOREIGN EXCHANGES

	Sterling rates October 2	Sterling rates October 9
Australia	2.0892-2 0936	2 0767-2.0798
Austria	15.86-15 88	15.75-15.78
Belgium	46.37-46.47	46.08-46.18
Canada	2.1220-2.1250	2 1134-2 1165
Denmark	8.74-8.76	8.70-8.73
France	7.77-7.78	7.86-7.87
Germany	2.2545-2.2578	2.2374-2.2405
Hong Kong	12 21-12 22	12.25-12.26
Ireland	0.9762-0.9767	0.9791-0.9818
Italy	2,545-2,549	2,549-2,553
Japan	156.22-156.46	159.08-159.36
Netherlands	2.5248-2.5281	2.5090-2.5123
New Zealand	2.4065-2.4104	2.3881-2.3914
Norway	9.91-9.92	9.90-9.91
Portugal	236.48-237.11	235.51-236.15
Spain	195.06-195.35	194.55-194.84
Sweden	10.92-10.95	11.03-11.06
Switzerland	1.8231-1.8260	1.8082-1.8110
USA	1.5796-1.5806	1.5846-1.5858
ECU	1.2161-1.2174	1.2223-1.2234

FTSE100 Share index down 9.9 at 3510.9. FTSE 250 index down 5.9 at 3953.1. Gold up $1.50 at $384.75.

Arafat's Chameleon Qualities

The PLO leader has no real persona beyond the needs of the day, writes **Jim Hoagland**

YASSER ARAFAT is an action painting in progress, changing shape and meaning before your eyes as the most recent touch of color dries. He is trying with Israeli help to cast himself as Palestinian president in waiting, a long lost friend of America and even a tired family man who travels too much and never sees his kid.

That was the Arafat who dropped by The Washington Post after signing a second peace accord with Israel at the White House earlier this month. When he responded to a reporter's question about his family life (he married for the first time in 1990 at age 61) with a complaint about never being home, he achieved the one thing I never thought Arafat capable of: total banality.

That is a price he is willing to pay if it will help keep Americans politically involved in the Middle East. An image change, from revolutionary and terrorist to caring parent and Yasser Everyman, is all in a day's work for Arafat.

Israel's leaders have discovered, to their alternating relief and horror, that Arafat will do whatever the circumstances require. It is pointless to analyze the statements he makes to different audiences to prove that the real Arafat is a secret unconverted terrorist or an ardent peacemaker. There is no real Arafat beyond the needs of the day.



This is inevitable for a man who has emerged as the dominant leader of a people who have known only occupation or exile for centuries. Under the Turks, British, Arabs and Israelis, the Palestinians have had to adapt and survive as their indigenous leaders have been systematically cut down by their occupiers.

In a historic gamble, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres turned that equation inside out two years ago. They brought Arafat back from exile to preside over the fiefdoms of Jericho and Gaza. Now they have promised him authority over the remaining populated areas of the West Bank and an opportunity to win legitimacy as Palestinian leader in a free election six months from now.

Weary of running Palestinian lives and the enormous expenditures on security that required, Rabin is pumping up a still unsteady Palestinian leadership. He has refused to let terrorist bombs and other attacks on Israeli civilians shake his determination to pursue the peace process.

In Cold War days, Arafat served a useful purpose for the Israelis and for Arab governments dependent on U.S. or Soviet largess: As the personification of Palestinian terrorism, he frightened Americans into caring about the Middle East. A revolutionary Palestine Liberation Organization, backed by the Soviet Union, might destroy Israel and overturn Arab regimes valuable to Americans for oil and other reasons. America had to be involved.

With the Cold War ending, Arafat got one last shot at playing the bogeyman. He eagerly plunged into the trenches with Saddam Hussein. But the United States smashed the rabid Arab nationalism Saddam and Arafat championed during the Gulf War.

An Arafat unable to scare Washington or seduce Moscow was of no use to Arab leaders, who abandoned him. The Palestinian had only one option left. He could be useful in keeping America involved in the Middle East not by making threats of war but by making promises of peace. And Rabin decided that Arafat was at last weak enough for Israel to take seriously and even to grant concessions if required.

The Israelis have discovered what Arab leaders already knew about Arafat and what Americans must now absorb: He plays a weak hand well.

"We have tried so many times in the past" to be close friends with America, Arafat said after signing the peace accord.

His version skips a lot of ugly history to the contrary. But his latest reinvention of himself is useful to an Israeli government taking a big gamble to achieve peaceful coexistence. It is a chance worth taking, while remembering that Arafat's promises commit only those who believe them.

Money Talks, and for the Young It Speaks Volumes

OPINION
William Raspberry

THE IDEA was to get my students thinking of the influence of income on the ability of families to raise healthy, happy children.

"Grinding poverty," they agreed, would make the task virtually impossible. But, they also reasoned, having lots of money (as opposed to merely "enough") would not necessarily make it easier. But what is "enough"?

Then I hit them with a device I remembered from the only Charles Murray book I ever really liked, In Pursuit Of Happiness. Here it is. Imagine you will have to give your own young child over to someone else to raise and that your choices are these: First, a poor couple, mother and father both working but barely making ends meet. But they are as honest as the day is long, believe deeply in value of education, and they place a high priority on integrity and personal responsibility.

The other couple, though they have never worked, have an adequate supply of income — perhaps winning a million-dollar lottery has guaranteed them an income of $50,000 a year. Unlike the first couple, the lottery winners would never be forced to dress your child in hand-me-down clothes. But they are indifferent to education, to integrity and to personal responsibility. Both couples would treat your child with equal affection. Which do you choose?

Too easy? I thought so, too, and I was prepared to offer a complication: The second couple would be rich, not merely comfortable, implying the possibility of boarding school.

In fact, I never got to the complication. About half the class preferred to place their child in the care of the "merely comfortable" couple. Poor but honest? Puhleeze!

My gasp must have been audible. The "right" answer had seemed so obvious to me that I was prepared to examine the reasons why my students — bright, mostly affluent upperclassmen at Duke University — placed such a low priority on wealth. Well, as it turns out, many of them didn't.

One young man explained that home isn't the only place where children learn values. He'd opt for economic security and take his chances that his child would learn integrity and other positive values somewhere else — in school, in church or from neighbors.

Several of his classmates disagreed, of course, but a lot of them didn't. And I've been trying to figure out why.

I took up teaching this semester because I thought it a useful way to avoid falling into the comfortable ruts of my own thoughts. Dealing with bright young people, I was convinced, would keep my mind fresh. Did I misjudge? Would it turn out that the only thing I'd learn from my students is how out of date I am, or how great the values gulf between us? How could something that seemed so plain to me seem so problematic to them?

Two possibilities occur to me. The first is that today's parents may spend less time than those of my generation talking about values. Maybe many of today's young people really do learn their core values from teachers and neighbors and peers.

The second possibility is that these particular young people may be so far removed from poverty, in income and in memory, that they overestimate its negative consequences. And why shouldn't they? Haven't we — and I do include myself — implicated poverty as the fount of everything from school failure to teen pregnancy to violence? Haven't we implied that it is poverty that tempts our young people away from regular school attendance and into drug dealing and other crimes?

Maybe my students believe that a child placed with the poor-but-honest couple would grow up so sad and resentful, so lacking in the self-confidence that affluence seems to provide, that almost anything would be better than poverty. Well, yes, maybe better than the poverty we describe as "grinding," better than squalor, better than the desperate state of so many in what we call the underclass.

But here is the truth — and just maybe the cause of my consternation. That poor couple, who value education and integrity and personal responsibility — that household brimming with everything important except money — those are my parents, that is the home I grew up in, happy and healthy and confident.

And I never saw anything remotely tragic about it. Quite the contrary. Would I have been happier if my parents had had the money to give us more things? Quite likely. Would I have traded what they did give my siblings and me for money? Not for any amount you could name.

Canada's Health-Care System Ails

Anne Swardson in Toronto

RANJIT DHALIWAL clearly remembers the night he decided Canada was no place to practice medicine.

He had an emergency case, a patient with an eye infection so severe that surgery needed to be performed immediately even though it was 11:30 p.m. A retinal surgeon then practicing in Toronto, Dhaliwal knew that to save the eye, every minute counted. But only one operating room was available to his practice, and it was occupied. The anesthesiologist in charge refused to call in a second medical team, and it took a shouting match over the phone to get the operation under way within the hour.

"When I found myself yelling at the anesthesiologist at midnight to save someone's eye, I knew I was in the wrong place," said Dhaliwal. Today, he practices in Augusta, Georgia, a job he selected among six offers around the United States last year. He and his partner have three laser machines like the one he shared in Canada with 11 other ophthalmologists, and when he needs to perform an emergency operation, the operating room at the local hospital is ready as soon as he is.

The Vancouver-born Dhaliwal is one of a growing stream of Canadian doctors sadly leaving their native country to practice elsewhere, especially in the United States. They leave not so much for the money — although they generally earn more south of the border — but because cutbacks in Canada's nationalized health system are denying them the resources, the funding or the freedom to do their jobs as they desire.

"It's not just pocketbook. It's cuts that reduce access to facilities, to operating-room time, to necessary tests," said Jack Armstrong, a Winnipeg pediatrician who is president of the Canadian Medical Association.

The Canadian system was often held up as a model during the debate over American health-care reform last year. It was short of money even then, but its financial health has deteriorated in the last few months. The number of the migrants is not large — net departures are less than 1 percent of Canada's 55,000 doctors, according to government figures. But more leave every year, and among them are some of the best. In addition, as cash-strapped provincial governments cut further into the system, departures are likely to increase.

In Canada's national health system, which is funded by the federal and provincial governments, patients are treated by the doctor of their choice, and the fee is paid from tax dollars. As costs of the system have skyrocketed in recent years, deficit-ridden provinces have imposed a variety of budget-cutting measures on doctors and hospitals.

"I'm getting a lot of calls" from Canadian doctors, said Susan Craig, president of Toronto-based Medical Recruitment Services, which specializes in U.S. placements. "Every day doctors call . . . The insecurity is what's bothering them."

Not all Canadian doctors view the United States as a panacea. Eric Grafstein, a Vancouver emergency-room doctor, ruled it out after residencies in New York and Baltimore in part because "I'd certainly worry about so many people with guns." The ones who did make the move know that the American system is in flux as well, and that pressure to reduce costs is growing.

"Most of us who come to the States recognize that the situation here is evolving," Dhaliwal said. "We're just delaying the inevitable."

Macao Calmly Awaits Transfer to China

Keith B. Richburg in Macao

OFTEN forgotten, much neglected and long derided as a sleepy, seedy outpost of hookers, high rollers and general lowlifes, this tiny Portuguese-run enclave on the Chinese coast is accustomed to living in the shadow of larger, more prosperous Hong Kong next door.

Like Hong Kong, Macao is to revert to Chinese control — in 1999, two years after the British colony. And, as usual, the world's attention has focused on Hong Kong, where many people fear being ruled by the Communist government in Beijing and where the British and Chinese have wrangled over how the colony will be governed. But people here are showing that they can approach the turnover with far less fear and uncertainty and with little political rancor — so little, in fact, that many are quietly boasting of a "Macao model" for a smooth, non-confrontational transition that noisy Hong Kong should try to emulate.

"We have to work on a different basis," said João Mira Gomes, diplomatic adviser to the governor of Macao. "Macao is much smaller than Hong Kong, and Portugal is much smaller than Britain. You always have to seek compromise in your presence in Macao."

The Portuguese government has "a very correct attitude with regard to Macao," said Edmund Ho, a prominent local banker close to China who is vice president of Macao's legislative assembly. "They tried their best to cooperate."

"I don't think there is fear here," said Jose Luis De Sales Marques, the mayor of Macao city. "Of course there will always be some anxiety because change is on the way . . . But the process of change in Hong Kong and Macao is very different. Attitudes over China are different."

Many Macao residents have reason to be more sanguine about the coming of Chinese rule. Unlike the 3 million Hong Kong Chinese who have been spurned in their request for British citizenship, some 105,000 Macanese, more than one-fifth of the population in this six-square-mile territory, were given Portuguese passports with full rights to live in Portugal or anywhere in the European Community if things should turn sour after the 1999 transfer.

"I got (a passport), and many of my friends got it," said Gary Ngai Mei Cheong, vice president of the Macao Institute of Culture. "That's a very firm safety policy. They're not anxious to move away now, because they can go anytime later."

In the view of some, it is Portugal's handling of the passport issue that now gives Lisbon greater bargaining power with Beijing. "They gave everybody (born in Macao) citizenship, so they don't have the same hang-ups the British have," said an American businessman in Hong Kong who travels regularly to Macao. "All these battles the British get into with China is because the British took away the nationality rights of 3 million Hong Kong people."

There are other reasons for Macao's more relaxed attitude as the transition approaches. Unlike neighboring Hong Kong, Macao so far has had few run-ins with China over issues such as the rule of law and elections. Macao has been electing some of the members of its local legislature — which is dominated by pro-China figures — for almost 20 years and it already has a local supreme court in place, avoiding another potentially contentious issue that has marred Hong Kong's transition. China has said Macao's institutions will remain in place.

Another reason is that China's presence is far more of an everyday reality. As the American businessman put it, you can see China from almost any spot in Macao.

Scores of Macao residents cross the border each morning to the city of Zhuhai, one of China's special economic zones, to take advantage of lower prices on such household items as toilet paper, soap and shampoo. Chinese workers, in turn, stream into Macao each morning as part of a labor importation plan agreed between the two cities. Zhuhai's gleaming new apartment buildings and office towers provide the backdrop for Macao, somewhat dwarfing the little enclave. With Portugal's European-oriented companies playing only a limited role in Macao's economy, China has long been the dominant player here.

Beijing, through the powerful Bank of China, controls the main share of Macao's banking system, with Portuguese banks accounting for 34 percent, according to the government economics secretary, Vitor Rodriques Pessoa. China is a one-third shareholder of Macao's new international airport, due to open in November.

"The only investment we get outside of Hong Kong is from China," Ho said. "The residents of Macao, they have all kinds of experience with Chinese doing business in Macao."

Macao residents have less fear of China than their Hong Kong counterparts, Ho said, because "most of them have been in and out of China for the past 20 years . . . They have witnessed the changes going on inside China. Most of them realize China is changing for the better." By contrast, he added, "until a few years back, half of the Chinese population in Hong Kong had never visited China."

Technically, Macao is not a colony; it is considered by both Portugal and China as a piece of Chinese territory under temporary administration by Portugal. Its strange status — with China having legal sovereignty but allowing Portugal to run it — has meant the Portuguese authorities must rely on consultation and diplomacy with China as they administer it.

CHINA
Zhuhai
Macao
SOUTH CHINA SEA
Taipa Bridge
1 mile
Causeway
Taipa Island
Coloane Island
CHINA
Hong Kong

Young Fatties Face Unhealthy Future

Sally Squires

THE NUMBER of seriously overweight children and adolescents in the United States has more than doubled during the past three decades, with most of the increase occurring since 1980, according to the latest government figures.

Results of the third National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES-III), released last week by the National Center for Health Statistics, show that 4.7 million American youths age 6 through 17 are severely overweight. That is 11 percent of children in that age group, more than twice the 5 percent rate observed in the 1960s.

"No matter how we define it, we see the same pattern in children that we've seen in adults over the same time period," said Richard Troiano, an epidemiologist at the health statistics center and leading author of a study on the findings.

Experts believe that American children are probably ballooning for the same reasons that their parents are. Studies by Tufts University researcher William Dietz and others suggest that physical inactivity — largely due to television, video games and personal computers — conspires with too much munching of high-calorie foods to add unwanted pounds.

The latest findings, presented at a science writers' meeting in Miami Beach sponsored by the American Medical Association, suggest that excess weight is a problem facing all American children, regardless of sex, race or ethnic background.

"I'm not surprised by the increase, but I'm surprised by the degree of the increase," said William J. Klish, chairman of the American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Nutrition. "It's a very significant jump."

The study — which examined a national sample of nearly 3,000 children and adolescents from 1988 to 1991 — found some of the steepest increases among African-American girls. For example, 16 percent of African-American girls age 6 to 11 fell into the heaviest groups, compared with 10 percent of white girls the same age.

Defense Team's Illusion of Unity Shattered

Joel Achenbach

LONG, LONG ago, before the opening arguments of the O.J. Simpson trial Johnnie L. Cochran Jr. made a prediction. He said that although there had been some internal problems in the Dream Team of Simpson lawyers, there would come a day when the trial would be over and they would all have a reunion — along with their acquitted client.

Cochran got it almost right. The Dream Team won. But it promptly broke up. The acrimony held in check for nine months erupted all over the airwaves, starting a few hours after the verdict with Robert L. Shapiro's verbal stink bombs thrown at his co-counselors, and continuing with F. Lee Bailey calling Shapiro a "sick little puppy" and Cochran telling Oprah Winfrey, "Apparently, Bob's ego was much more crushed than we believed initially."



Hands off . . . Simpson tries to show the jury that bloodstained gloves were too small for him

In reality the Dream Team broke up in January. The past nine months have been an illusion of teamwork. It was probably inevitable: That many high-priced egotists with flashy ties cannot sit side by side for a year without learning to despise one another.

Shapiro was never a great trial lawyer. His reputation was that of a deal-maker, someone who could get his celebrity clients a decent plea bargain. He had represented Christian Brando, Marlon's son, in a murder case and had negotiated a plea there. The Simpson case did not offer any such chance for a deal, because both sides had too much at stake: Simpson adamantly denied doing the killings, and the District Attorney's Office adamantly refused to consider a plea to any charge less than "a murder," as District Attorney Gil Garcetti once put it.

Shapiro had seemed in full command of the case three days after the June 12, 1994, killings. Simpson's first attorney, Howard Weitzman, bowed out when it became clear that the Hall of Famer would soon be facing a serious criminal allegation.

Before that first week was out, Shapiro had already been caught by surprise. He had assured authorities seeking to arrest Simpson that his client would turn himself in. Instead, with Shapiro upstairs, Simpson fled from his friend Robert Kardashian's house, becoming, briefly, a fugitive, and forcing Shapiro to go on national television to plead for him to come back. Shapiro told everyone that it was the worst day of his professional life.

His success later in putting together a formidable defense team — signing on his old mentor, the blustery Bailey, dialing up appellate court superstar Alan Dershowitz, and finally bringing on the courthouse wizard Cochran — led to his own loss of leadership. Cochran obviously was the greater courtroom talent. Simpson seemed to favor Cochran's aggressive approach.

Meanwhile Shapiro began to see nasty reports in the news media, questioning his competence, that seemed to be coming from someone on the defense team. Shapiro became convinced, after some internal sleuthing, that Bailey was the source of the damaging material. Shapiro called Bailey a "snake."

But it was Shapiro who was the big loser in the feud. Soon after the blowup, Simpson officially chose Cochran as the new leader of the Dream Team. A few days before opening arguments, Cochran organized a prayer circle of all the lawyers. They prayed right in Judge Lance A. Ito's courtroom when all the reporters and the judge himself had left. Then they went downstairs and held a news conference to say that they would all be getting along thenceforth. More important, Shapiro announced his own demotion. Cochran was now in charge.

Shapiro soon found himself trapped in a humiliating show of his own making. He still handled a few minor witnesses, but most of the time he had little obvious function. He watched himself becoming almost irrelevant. And he could do nothing about it. It would look bad for Simpson if the lawyer who had sat next to him for months suddenly abandoned the case. So he had to sit there, day in and day out, a statue in a suit.

After the verdict, he dished his discontent. In an interview last week on ABC-TV, he all but said that the defense team cheated justice by emphasizing the role of racism in the murder allegations against Simpson. "Not only did we play the race card, but we dealt it from the bottom of the deck," Shapiro said, a quote beamed round the nation. He said he'd never work with Cochran again, or ever again speak to Bailey.

Cochran responded by telling CBS, "On this, our happiest day of our whole careers, I feel bad for him. I feel sorry for him. He's the one who has problems. We don't."

Bailey told NBC-TV today that the problem is "Bob's shattered ego." Bailey said, "To attack Johnnie Cochran as he did is unforgivable because Johnnie Cochran bent over backwards to keep him from embarrassing himself."

The dissension among the victors in the Simpson case stood in sharp contrast to the mutual affection shown by the losers. After the verdict Garcetti, a normally cool, polished politician, began to lose his composure as he talked about the sacrifices of the prosecutors. When Chris Darden doubled over and wept, Marcia Clark went to his side and put her hand on his back. Clark moments earlier had unabashedly told her colleagues, in front of the listening world, "You're wonderful."

Nothing like that on the defense side. Cochran said of Shapiro, "I don't think anybody on the team is in any great hurry to work with him again."

Paradox of Race Dogged Trial in LA

Kevin Merida

THE O.J. Simpson verdict illustrates a paradox of America's tense racial climate. He lived in an exclusive white community, married a white woman, golfed at white country clubs, didn't crusade for black causes and yet was suddenly transformed into a symbol of racial justice.

"He became every black male who's ever been involved in the criminal justice system," said Wilbert A. Tatum, editor and publisher of New York's Amsterdam News, one of the most prominent black weeklies. "It was the black male in America who was on trial." And yet, Tatum added, "He was more of a success of white America."

For many African Americans, Orenthal James Simpson is a high-profile surrogate in the ongoing battle to address their grievances with the nation. It is a time, for many, of souring race relations, of cutbacks in social programs, of political and court assaults on hard-won civil rights gains. And so Simpson's acquittal represents for some a psychological victory.

"The verdict is clearly a re-affirmation of black public opinion," said Democratic pollster Ron Lester, citing surveys throughout the trial indicating that blacks overwhelmingly believed he was innocent. "It kind of confirms that there truly can be justice in America, and that is counter to what most blacks generally believe about the criminal justice system."

Yet, Simpson was no ordinary black defendant. He had money to defend himself, status to demand special treatment. And he hardly had the profile to become a civil rights cause célèbre.

"It really wasn't about O.J.," said Elaine Williams, a black barber in in South Central Los Angeles. "It was about everything that has happened over the years to black people in Los Angeles." She echoed the sentiments of other residents of that neighborhood, and indeed, other blacks across the country.

As to the question of guilt or innocence, "I think people fell on both sides of the issue," said Rep. Donald Payne (Dem. N-J), chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus. "I don't think that all blacks necessarily felt he was innocent . . . I'm not celebrating . . . Two lives were lost."

And yet Tatum noted that in Harlem last week — as occurred in some neighborhoods in Washington — people honked their horns, cheered and applauded the verdict. "There was something historic about this," Tatum said. "It displays an already open wound that America refuses to deal with — and that is racism."

Should anyone forget that, Tatum added, they should be reminded of a call to the newspaper's switchboard 15 minutes after the verdict: "There's going to be a whole lot of dead niggers and those at the Amsterdam News are first."

When Justice Becomes a Victim

COMMENT
Charles Krauthammer

LET'S PUT this case in perspective. A black man, the evidence of whose guilt in a brutal interracial double murder remains overwhelming, walks free. For generations, however, black men, the evidence of whose innocence in alleged interracial crimes was just as overwhelming, were jailed and executed and lynched. We are still far from righting the balance.

All this is true. Why then does it feel wrong to say it? For the same reason the Simpson verdict seems so wrong to so many: In deciding a case of guilt or innocence, a real case with real people, one is simply not supposed to invoke history nor to tote up group and racial grievances.

It does not matter whether Johnnie Cochran's summation to the jury to "send a message" with an acquittal is now cited by the jury as the reason for their astonishing verdict. Cochran's summation — as masterful as it was disgraceful — simply codified what the trial was all about: Whatever the evidence, this trial was about political message sending. As Cochran put it, the police couldn't control the police, the government couldn't control the police, so the jury, speaking for the American people, would control the police.

The disgrace of this argument lies in the contempt it shows for what trials in a free country are supposed to be about. They are supposed to be about what happened on the night of the crime, not about what generally happens elsewhere in society.

It is not that in America we deny the legitimacy of group identification or group grievances. But they are legitimate in the political arena, not the judicial. In the political backrooms it's perfectly proper and highly traditional for groups to grant each other special favors and support. But that is not supposed to go on in the courtroom.

At the political level, for example, we recognize the need for some righting of the balance for the internment of Japanese Americans in World War II. We did so by granting them the most honest and least corrupting means of balancing historical wrongs: monetary reparations.

The Simpson verdict balances wrongs in the least honest and most corrupting way. The appalling judicial injustices done routinely to black men in the past and the abusive police treatment of many black men in the present are undeniable. But had these indignities really been visited upon this black man?

On the contrary. This black man was a celebrity and accorded all the deference we slavishly accord men of his fame. This black man was convicted of wife-battering and given the most risible of sentences. And after the murders, it was because of the police courtesies offered a man of his celebrity that he managed to slip away for his famous Bronco ride. Many black men get brass-knuckle treatment from police. Simpson got kid gloves — yet brilliantly succeeded in borrowing the prestige of their victimhood.

The trial was supposed to be about him, not them. In America one does not pervert justice in real cases with real victims because of what has happened to others — whether in the distant Jim Crow past or in the immediate present of the foul Fuhrman. Or so we thought.

Perhaps we should not have so thought. After all, it is nearly 30 years since we made the fateful decision to start down the road of righting wrongs by group, and doing so by officially treating different groups differently. In America today we routinely hire, promote and even fire on the basis of race. The shock felt across much of America was the awful feeling that perhaps we now acquit murderers on the basis of race, too.

Johnnie Cochran's genius was to turn O.J. Simpson from an abusive husband and suspected murderer into a victim: of the police, of detective Mark Fuhrman, of white society rushing to judgment. Simpson, too, learned how to play the card. He has said that in his relationship with Nicole Simpson he felt like a battered husband.

Once Simpson was made the victim, the rest was commentary. The case could unfold to its logical conclusion. For victims, the rules are different — not for Nicole Simpson, mind you, a mere victim of murder, but for the other Simpson, victim of the higher crime of racism.

With Verve and Guts and Zest

Tom Wicker

A GOOD LIFE
Newspapering and Other Adventures
By Ben Bradlee
Simon & Schuster. 514pp. $27.50

WHEN Ben Bradlee was writing this memoir, he asked David Halberstam to suggest a title. Halberstam replied, "You've had a good life, Bradlee. Why not call it that?" Bradlee had, and he did, and justifies the title in this exuberant life story by a great editor who believes he was "put here on earth" to be a newspaperman. Bradlee survived two usually lethal early experiences — a childhood bout with polio and a Navy officer's berth on a World War II destroyer in the Pacific. Then, as he tells it, he lucked into successive jobs as Washington Post reporter, press officer of the U.S. Embassy in Paris, Newsweek correspondent first in Paris, then Washington, next as the magazine's Washington bureau chief.

By the late '50s, he was living on the same Georgetown block as Jacqueline and John Kennedy and had developed a boon-companion relationship with his neighbour, who happened to be running for president. The friendship lasted, overcoming differing interests in Kennedy's White House years, until the president's death.

In fact, luck had less to do with any of this than Ben Bradlee writes. He was an enterprising reporter from the beginning of his career on a long-dead New Hampshire newspaper, and he was the kind of irreverent, sophisticated, knowledgeable man JFK was likely to take to. Neither set much store by solemnity.

Indeed, Bradlee writes, it was "after a couple of shooters" that he brashly proposed to the late Philip Graham that Graham should buy Newsweek. Graham did so, creating the Post-Newsweek empire, and Bradlee made an invaluable connection with the Graham family. He soon became managing, later executive editor of The Post.

The rest is not just journalistic history: Watergate, the groundbreaking Style section, the bold follow-up printing of the Pentagon Papers soon after the New York Times disclosed them, the historic court decision that favoured publication, the transformation of the staid old Post into a remarkable newspaper.

When Ben Bradlee retired in 1991, Donald Graham summed up how well he had served The Post: "With verve and with guts and with zest for the big story and for the little story, and the number one desire . . . of getting the best staff of reporters and editors and photographers in the United States to join him in putting out a great newspaper." I can count on two or three fingers the editors I have known who deserved such tribute.

A Good Life is consistently interesting, of course, to anyone who lived through the times it recounts, and should be particularly so to journalists. Three passages gripped me more than most:

A detailed account of how Bradlee, a magazine journalist, prepared himself to edit (and transform, as he always intended) a daily newspaper. Night and day, from top to bottom of The Post building, from the publisher's office to the blue-collar press room, he worked to learn the business, not just his own duties but what everyone did or should do, how the complex — sometimes miraculous — business of putting a newspaper on the streets is accomplished night after night, even on holidays. Those who always wanted to edit a newspaper will envy the experience.

There is a sad account of how The Post covered the wreck of Gary Hart's presidential campaign in 1988. It led Bradlee to this reflection on how his close friend John Kennedy would have fared had reporters applied the same rules of coverage to him: "I have concluded that he could not have withstood the pressure of publicity. If the American public had learned — no matter how the public learned it — that the President of the United states had shared a girlfriend, in the biblical sense, with a top American gangster, and Lord knows who else, I am convinced he would have been impeached. That just seems unforgivably reckless behaviour."



Ben Bradlee: lasting friendship with John Kennedy

Bradlee's ultimate conclusion on politicians' "national security" threats to newspapers: "Patriotism is not exclusively the province of administration officials . . . more often than not, in my experience [they] use the claim of national security as a smokescreen to cover up their own embarrassment. Those of us who heard Richard Nixon claim he could not explain Watergate because matters of national security were involved will never automatically accept claims of national security. Those of us who were taken all the way to the Supreme Court for the Pentagon Papers . . . remember the Solicitor General of the United States eighteen years later writing that the national security was never threatened by publication."

Amen to that — a good lesson for all journalists and due warning to the public.

A Good Life may be too irreverent for some, too frank for others and discounted by many who apparently believe newspapers and newspapermen are without scruple or honour.

Ben Bradlee's memoir recounts a good life in journalism that nevertheless exhibited both — as well as the talent, the energy and the courage to act on them.

Tom Wicker retired in 1991 as a columnist for the New York Times.

Women of Independent Minds

Sarah Booth Conroy

THE WOMAN WHO RAN FOR PRESIDENT
The Many Lives of Victoria Woodhull
By Lois Beachy Underhill
Bridge Works. 352pp. $23.50

A WOMAN'S DILEMMA
Mercy Otis Warren And the American Revolution
By Rosemarie Zagarri
Harlan Davidson Inc. 187pp.
Paperback, $11.95

FROM POCAHONTAS TO POWER SUITS
Everything You Need to Know About Women's History In America
By Kay Mills
Plume/Penguin. 325pp.
Paperback, $10.95

JOHN ADAMS, urged by his wife Abigail to "remember the ladies," did so, but not in the way she wished. When Mercy Otis Warren's History Of The American Revolution was published in 1805 without enough hype for him, he criticized: "History is not the Province of the Ladies . . . , Little Passions and Prejudices, want of Information, false Information, want of Experience, erroneous Partiality are among the Faults."

In this, the 75th anniversary of the right of women to vote, the three biographical histories here considered prove Adams wrong.

"A pedestal is just as much a prison as any other small space," writes Gloria Steinem in her introduction to **The Woman Who Ran for President**, the biography of Victoria Woodhull (1838-1927), an important and neglected activist for the rights of women. Yet Woodhull not only managed to pose on a pedestal, but also to turn it into a large and spacious platform, equipped with a chorus singing her praises and an audience throwing money at her feet.

The notorious Woodhull built steps to her stage. In May 1872, the Equal Rights Party, which she organized, nominated her to run against President Ulysses S. Grant. Woodhull campaigned to full houses across the country, espousing votes for women, free love, and the right of women to earn money and own themselves.

Earlier, with support from Cornelius Vanderbilt, Woodhull had become the country's first woman stockbroker. She amassed a fortune during Wall Street's "great bear gold panic," Black Friday, September 24, 1869. She published a widely read weekly in New York. The newspaper not only carried propaganda for her presidential campaign but also covered Massachusetts Rep. Benjamin Butler's support of women's suffrage and printed letters from women pleased to have a voice, as well as installments of George Sand's novel In Spite Of All.

In fall 1870, Woodhull moved into the Willard Hotel to join "the third house" of Congress — the lobbyists. She appeared before a congressional committee to claim that the Constitution did not make sex distinctions. Since its adoption, Woodhull declared, women were citizens, obliged to pay taxes, and thus should also be allowed to vote.

So far, so good. But Woodhull displayed a passionate — in several senses — nature. She charged the religious leader Henry Ward Beecher with hypocrisy in his sermons and adultery with his friend's wife. He claimed she was blackmailing him. Woodhull herself confessed — nay proudly declared — in her speeches: "I am a free lover. I have an inalienable, constitutional and natural right . . . to change that love every day if I please."

Lois Beachy Underhill's research on Woodhull's past reveals that her mother, Annie Claflin, taught that as the seventh daughter of a seventh daughter she possessed remarkable powers. Annie — in Underhill's rhythmic prose — "knew the secret but sure signs of impending death, a dog howling near a window, a fruit tree that blossomed in the fall . . . chants to ward off illness, and lines of the hex to cast a spell." As best Underhill can tell, Woodhull's father, Buck, "combined the best traits of frontier self-reliance with a streak of the rascal and confidence man."

In the days of the American Revolution men and women became one when they married — and the husband was the one

After a disastrous marriage at 15, Woodhull took to the stage as a miracle healer. Her sister Tennessee had already been put to work telling fortunes. Tennie later said, "I told such wonderful things . . . that my father made from fifty dollars to a hundred a day at hotels simply by letting people see the strange clairvoyant child."

Underhill reveals wonderful things herself, in language as resplendent and eloquent as that of her subject. Even if Woodhull was never elected president, it wasn't for lack of trying.

Mercy Otis Warren (1718-1814) lived and wrote during the American Revolution, its prelude and aftermath. Those were the days when men and women became one when they married — and the husband was the one.

Though Warren seems to have led an exemplary life as a dutiful wife and mother, even she protested, "Let us by no means acknowledge such an inferiority as would check the ardor of our endeavors."

It certainly didn't check hers, though biographer Rosemarie Zagarri emphasizes that Warren was able to have a good education and publish numerous writings — poems, dramas and political papers, among others — because her parents, her husband and her brother believed in her right to do so.

Warren is clearly one of those talented women writers wrongly overlooked and forgotten, but due for revival, if only because she provides a window on life during the early days of this nation. Warren spent 30 years writing the almost 1,300-page History Of The Rise, Progress And Termination Of The American Revolution interspersed with Biographical, Political And Moral Observations, published in 1805. As Warren herself explained, she was "connected by nature, friendship, and every social tie, with many of the first patriots and most influential characters on the continent." It was, of course, this very book that so incensed John Adams to complain that "history is not the Province of the Ladies."

But then "well-behaved women rarely make history." So observes biographer Laurel Thatcher Ulrich in Kay Mill's **From Pocahontas to Power Suits**, a compendium of praise for famous American women from the 1600s to the 1990s.

Too true! Mills's book, however, is full of women, both victims and victors, who took chances for the causes in which they believed. So many are unjustly forgotten: among them, Angelina Weld Grimke, a South Carolina woman who with her sister Sarah was a supporter of freeing slaves; Mabel Staupers, a graduate of Freeman's Hospital School of Nursing in Washington and a founder of the National Council of Negro Women, who tried to integrate military nursing services; and Frances Perkins, who headed the cabinet committee that initiated the Social Security Act of 1935 and federal unemployment insurance.

Yet Mills's book doesn't quite live up to its subtitle. How could it when it fails to mention Margaret Bayard Smith, the chronicler of Washington's early days, or Jill Ker Conway, a writer and former president of Smith College, or Louisiana Congresswoman Lindy Boggs, whose soft words combined with her steel resolve resulted in years of good legislation?

Sarah Booth Conroy is at work on a novel about Martha Washington.

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Support wanes for Mexico's guerrillas

The indigenous are tired of waiting for their problems to be solved. **Bertand de la Grange** reports from La Sultana

AFTER the humiliation of the uprising by Zapatistas in Chiapas state on January 1, 1994, the Mexican authorities have radically changed their attitude.

"The dispute in Chiapas is not a military problem," said a Mexican general, who wished to remain anonymous. "The Zapatista rebellion deserves a social and political solution that will be found within the framework of the current negotiations. The guerrilla movement will gradually disappear as refugees go back to their villages, even though a small core of rebels determined to carry on fighting will always remain."

A military offensive on February 9 enabled the army to recover — almost without a fight — all the territory the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) had occupied for more than a year. Despite protests from several leftwing organisations following the offensive, the army is convinced it has won the psychological war that the Zapatista leader, Sub-Commandante Marcos, started when he released statements to national newspapers. Now, hemmed in by thousands of government soldiers in his Lacandon forest hideout, Marcos has lost the support of a large section of his social base and can no longer afford to taunt the authorities.

"Two hundred and sixty Zapatista families have come to us asking to be taken back to their villages," said the general. "They handed over their weapons. For the most part they were simple shotguns. They say their leaders had misled them and they are disappointed that a struggle to which they have given more that 10 years of their lives has produced no results."

The EZLN had succeeded in rallying several thousand peasants, "militiamen", who often had no weapons and served as a back-up for the hard core of "insurgents".

"There are no more than 300 insurgents left, concentrated in some 10 camps," said the general. "We know very well where they are, but our mission is not to wipe them out. Our task is simply to ensure freedom of circulation and the security of the people who are working with us in the peace camps."

Some 15 peace camps, made up of a few volunteers sent by various human rights organisations, have been set up in villages in the military intervention zone to protect indigenous Mexicans against any future ill-treatment at the hands of soldiers.

The track leading from Ocosingo, the administrative centre briefly occupied by EZLN guerrillas in January 1994, to the village of La Sultana snakes between the densely forested flanks of the Corralchen and Livingstone mountain chains. The roadblocks set up by the Zapatista fighters disappeared in February when the soldiers arrived. The first roadblock was at San Miguel, 30km from Ocosingo. A little farther away, the army has established its quarters at the entrance to Patihuitz, a village of Tzeltals where the rebels did not have the full support of the local population. Torrential rain makes a quagmire of the track leading to Prado Pacayal, Marcos's former headquarters.

TODAY ALL that is left of the former rebel headquarters is a collection of adobe huts without electricity, a basketball court used for drying coffee and black beans — courtesy of the Mexican government — and a peace camp set up in a cement building where a Basque from Bilbao has slung his hammock.

The army pulled out of the region some time ago, after systematically wrecking all the houses, which is why this village seems to have remained under EZLN influence.

Only trucks can make the arduous trip to San Juan, where soldiers have set up camp on the banks of the river. A sergeant reported that the "situation is under control" and that the army had "no problems with the Zapatistas: we're Mexicans, after all". He pretended to be surprised at the attitude of the people in neighbouring La Sultana. "They don't want us to enter the village and they refuse to accept the surplus food we offer them," he said.



A member of the Zapatista negotiation team wears a traditional ceremonial hat from Chiapas's Mayan Highlands PHOTO: JOE CAVARETTA

"The explanation is simple," said Pedro, a Zapatista leader from La Sultana. "In February we fled the approaching army and lived for a month hidden in the mountains. When we returned to the village, we found the army had ransacked everything, including our reserves of maize and 90 bags of coffee we were going to sell."

Most of the 80 families in La Sultana belong to the EZLN and several of the rebels, like "Captain Hugo", were killed in the fighting at Ocosingo. "Our struggle will not have been in vain," said Pedro, "even though for the moment we are in a terrible situation. We're fighting not just for La Sultana but also for the whole country, which wants freedom, justice and democracy."

Like most of the region's indigenous communities, La Sultana's residents have to cope with a new challenge — how to reconcile the families divided between partisans and adversaries of the armed struggle. Almost half the zone's 70,000 inhabitants have given everything up and taken refuge in Ocosingo and other small towns in the neighbourhood. Many have returned to their villages under the protection of the army and the leading anti-Zapatista peasant organisation, Aric. However, several communities are opposed to the return of the "traitors".

"The Chiapas conflict is a real tragedy for the local people," said Carmen Legoreta, who has been working with Aric for many years. She condemned the "manipulation of the indigenous by a small group of revolutionaries from Mexico City".

The local church, which supplied the EZLN with many of its leaders through the indigenous catechists it had trained, seems today to be turning its back on a movement that one Ocosingo priest, Rafael Diaz, accuses of having helped to "tear the social fabric". "There is an obvious divergence between Marcos's national political ambitions and the project of the local Zapatista who are ready to die for land and a better life for their children," Diaz said.

(October 4)

A blind eye to nuclear uncertainties

EDITORIAL

THE Prime Minister, Alain Juppé, has no doubts. On October 2, after the nuclear test at Fangataufa atoll, he declared that "if there is one point today on which there is no arguing, it is that they [the tests] are completely harmless to the environment. This has has been acknowledged by everyone."

His foreign minister, Hervé de Charette, added that the tests had "no negative influence on the environment as all the reports of international experts have proved".

As a matter of fact, experts are divided on the subject. Experts at the French Atomic Energy Authority have always maintained that the tests were absolutely safe. Their assertions are not, however, totally credible to the extent that they are both judge and judged and have long pursued a policy of secretiveness.

"International experts" are more cautious. Three independent missions that inspected Mururoa in the 1980s were concerned about the effect of the explosions on the atoll's geological structure. Their concern was confirmed by a study carried out by 20 Australian scientists in August just before the tests were resumed.

In the light of the information that is currently available, it does not appear that the nuclear tests France carried out in the Pacific under the authority of successive Fifth Republic presidents have resulted in a significant leakage of radioactivity. But it looks increasingly likely that underground explosions could start cracks that risk bringing the ocean into contact with the radioactive matter sealed inside the basalt.

The scientific uncertainty about a major risk is clear. It is covered by the declaration that all the heads of state attending the Rio de Janeiro earth summit signed in June 1992. This states that in the event of a risk of serious or irreversible damage, the absence of absolute scientific proof should not serve as an excuse to postpone the adoption of effective measures to prevent damage to the environment.

The purpose of this precautionary principle is to devise new rules of international behaviour by placing global interests ahead of national interests. It is under the tenets of this principle that the international community is calling on France to consider whether the five or six tests still to be carried out are worth the risk, even if it is uncertain, of further destabilising the atoll and disseminating radioactive matter in the Pacific because of a national interest deemed to be more important than the interests of all mankind.

(October 4)

Walesa begins to fight back as polls loom

Jan Krauze from Warsaw

IS the Polish president, Lech Walesa, outflanking communism's heirs on social issues? With the presidential election five weeks away, Walesa has unsuccessfully attempted to prevent the country's post-communist government from reducing the scale of pension increases.

The president cast his veto against the proposal, but was overridden by a two-thirds majority in the parliament. Although the present Socialist-Peasant Party coalition has again stood together against the president, it has also given him a stick with which he can beat it. The ex-communist candidate, Alexander Kwasniewski, who is clearly ahead in the polls but looks like facing a difficult run-off election, could lose precious votes among the country's 9 million pensioners.

The heirs of "people's Poland have shown their true colours", declared Walesa after the vote in parliament. "I did what I could" [to help the pensioners], he pleaded, "but I wasn't allowed to." It remains to be seen whether the pensioners will be grateful to the president for his good intentions or blame him for being powerless.

In any case, pensions and pensioners are an issue that has been popping up regularly in Polish politics in recent years. It is also the subject of a long-standing dispute between the government and Walesa. Although elderly pensioners' incomes are often very low, pensions are gobbling up an increasing part of the budget, and all the governments after the fall of the communist regime have been coming up against the same problem. The government wants to stay in office after the elections but is unable to balance the budget, and is therefore having to take temporary measures.

The prime minister, Jozef Oleksy, is aware of the electoral danger. He went on television to try to persuade the public — and the president — to be reasonable. Two days later, Walesa went on television to say he was vetoing the government measures and brushed aside criticism that he was being demagogic. Was it not Olesky and his "comrades" (a pointed reference to the prime minister's communist past), he asked, who three years ago urged him to oppose a similar measure taken by a liberal government?

At the time, Walesa did not veto the measure and his popularity suffered as a result. This time, the president told the country, the ex-communists have "changed masks" and want him, the president, to bear the electoral brunt of their decisions. "I made a mistake, but I have corrected my errors and will not repeat them," said Walesa.

It was a rousing address, an example of the kind of thing Walesa can still do very well. And it was a warning to his adversaries on the right and left.

His opponents did not wait for his address to realise the danger represented by a president who only a little while ago seemed to be completely isolated, mired in his own boastful talk and written off in the polls. But his ratings have been steadily improving in recent months. Though still far behind Kwasniewski, Walesa has recovered much of the ground he lost to his main rival on the right, Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz, governor of the National Bank of Poland.

(October 1/2)



Australians take to French-bashing

'People here are saying things about the French that they wouldn't dare say about the Jews or the Chinese.' **Corine Lesnes** reports from Sydney

THE FRONT line of the guerrilla movement against French nuclear tests runs through New South Wales' "American" capital, Sydney. With its 4 million residents from an array of ethnic backgrounds, it is a comfortable city to live in, nicely spaced out and more easygoing than Melbourne, which is predominantly British and withdrawn.

Ecology is important in this new multicultural Australia, made up of 120 different community groups. It has an identity value likely to serve as a bonding agent. "Australians see themselves as people who respect the environment and human values," says Brian Hillman, a lawyer.

A Frenchman who resents the boycott sees things differently: "They're people feeding heavily on New Age ideas and political correctness," he says.

In the midst of the city's prevailing tidiness, one element stands out thanks to its appearance of neglect. It is the "peace camp", set up by anti-nuclear protesters at 31 Market Street, in front of the French consulate-general. Since the nuclear tests were announced on June 13, more than 40,000 French nationals, most of them also Australian citizens, have found themselves part of a blacklisted ethnic group.

In moments when they can see the issue with some historical perspective, Australians remember that the French have been through two wars this century. This, they realise, must influence their perception of danger in the world. But still they arrive inevitably at another conclusion. Now that the cold war is over, where is the danger?

The psychological pressure is growing almost daily. Turn on the television to a documentary on Rwanda and the presenter will conclude by asking "what were the French doing there?" and then "what they are doing in Mururoa?". Newspaper readers write in urging the Tahitians to "kick the French out". Posters shouting "Stop the Frogs" confront pedestrians and drivers. Scaffolding around one building carried a banner proclaiming: "Construction workers are against French tests". Shops stock postcards for sending to French families with the message: "If the bomb is so clean, test it on the Côte d'Azur".

The anti-nuclear campaign has even inspired fashion in the region. For A$20 one can buy a T-shirt with a picture of Jacques Chirac as Napoleon and the motto: *"Liberté, égalité, stupidité"*. Melbourne's mayor had a giant advertising hoarding showing a top fashion model baring her bottom painted blue, white and red taken down because it was . . . sexist.

Are these an expression of well-worn clichés about the French, or a mark of real frustration? Anti-French jokes are, after all, generally aimed well below the belt. Whatever the case, it is clear that French-bashing has become a popular sport. As one financier of Greek origin pointed out: "They're saying things about the French they wouldn't dare say about the Jews or the Chinese."

When the Sydney Morning Herald produced an article headlined *"Pourquoi les Français sont des connards"* (Why the French are stupid bastards), the Alliance Française protested to the official agency monitoring racial discrimination. No complaint was recorded, but the media was urged to show restraint.

The Alliance Française in Sydney is to celebrate its 100th anniversary, and the Premier of New South Wales, Bob Carr, was to preside over the ceremonies. Today Carr is in the front line of the anti-nuclear protest.

Local political analysts say that the verbal excesses must be seen in relative terms. Australia is a country where people don't mince their words. Politicians, even in the upper reaches of the state, can hurl epithets like "yobbo" at one another in parliament without suffering any consequences.

French diplomats at the consulate on the 26th floor of St Martin's Tower are hoping the worst is now behind them. The man who fire-bombed the French consulate in Perth in mid-June — a gesture the whole country judged to be quite "un-Australian" — has been sentenced to three years in prison.

The fax machine at the consulate is working once again. It had broken down under an avalanche of protest messages. The consul-general, Thierry Viteau, is still the object of a boycott by local municipal corporation employees — they refuse to empty his dustbins — but his Australian neighbours have taken over the task and collect his rubbish for him. In a gesture to show how petty-minded all of this is, Viteau is asking the municipality for a refund of his refuse collection tax.

After France protested that the post office was breaching diplomatic rules, mail is again being delivered to the consulate. Some 3,000 protest letters have arrived, but according to the French, the outrage expressed isn't universal. "It is the Joneses and the Smiths representing Anglo-Saxon Protestant morality who write, not the McCarthys," says one official.

THE FRENCH have always tended to attribute the scale of the protests to Anglo-French rivalry. But right from the very first opinion poll in June, 95 per cent of respondents said "no" to the nuclear tests, 1 per cent said they were for them and 4 per cent "didn't know".

In a country of strong-minded people, such unanimity is considered exceptional. Even the Liberals have taken a firm stand on the issue. With elections in the offing, the strength of public reaction has led the Labor government to stiffen its initial position, which was judged too moderate.

The idea that Australia is full of Francophobes does not stand up. French words are found everywhere. You can drive in a car called Calais and buy trinkets in a shop called Oooh La La! The prime minister, Paul Keating, is a collector of French clocks. Before he was elected, he threatened to go to Paris on leave if he failed to win power. In the language of the political community here, this has become known as the "Paris option" — success or a comfortable exile.

The French ambassador to Australia, Dominique Girard, besieged by the media after calling on the acting foreign affairs minister, Bob McMullan, in Canberra PHOTOGRAPH: MICHAEL BOWERS

The unanimity of the reaction results largely from the Australian belief that they had seen the last of the nuclear tests. The issue was at the centre of protests as early as the sixties, and subsided when French atmospheric tests ended. In the eighties, Australia had to battle hard to get compensation from the British government for the 13 atmospheric tests it conducted over the Australian desert. In 1986, the Americans had to agree to set up a commission to compensate the victims of the tests they carried out in the Marshall Islands. The extraction of uranium is also a subject that has long been debated in the Labor party and the trade unions.

After 1992, the Australians thought that the nuclear issue had died. However, it must also be pointed out that Australians have a different perception of distance to Europeans. When you may have to travel 3,500km to visit your family in Perth, the Mururoa atoll, 6,000km away, is indeed "just next door".

The French consulate-general's office of economic development on the 35th floor of St Martin's Tower is out of bounds to visitors. Bernard Ould Yahoui, the commercial counsellor, recently laid on a wine-tasting of cahors for a few selected guests as a very cautious curtain-raiser for the beaujolais nouveau he plans to launch in November.

Yahoui has reason to be disappointed. French businesses have made great inroads in the Australian market in the space of a few years. There are 200 French companies in Australia today employing some 40,000 people, compared with 80 firms 10 years ago. The industrial groups CGE and Lyonnaise des Eaux have won bids for major public works projects in New South Wales. This would have been unimaginable in the days when Australian companies reserved the better part of their investments for the British. Last February, Bouygues, the French construction firm, was selected to build an underground railway line between the centre of the city and the airport.

French businessmen say that no contract has yet been cancelled. But when they add, "without wishing to be arrogant", that Australia, the world's 11th economic power, does not impress them, that it is located "far from the world's business markets" and represents only 0.4 per cent of French exports, one senses their pique.

For the moment it is very difficult to assess the impact of the boycotts. A spokesman of the French-Australian Chamber of Commerce (a new name for the old French Chamber of Commerce in Australia, which was abruptly renamed at the end of August) says sales of champagne have dropped between 20 and 40 per cent. Wines and cosmetics have been affected by about the same amount but there are no figures for other goods.

Several lists of "prohibited" goods have been circulating. One can be found in the consumer magazine Choice. Products ranging from Aspro to Louis Vuitton bags are among the 108 blacklisted items.

BUT THE world economy is so intricately intertwined that those who favour a boycott are having a hard time determining what a French product is. Australia's leading wine producer, Orlando Wyndham, is 80 per cent owned by Pernod-Ricard. That name has also been added to the list. On the other hand, the French group Alcatel is the main installer of telephone equipment in Australia. Anti-nuclear protesters are advising telephone users to check their plugs and return them if necessary. But Alcatel, which employs 2,000 people, manufactures telephone exchanges in Australia that are exported to China.

"Who are you hurting with a boycott?" asks Yahoui.

Robert Somervaille, the Australian Chamber of Commerce's new spokesman, a respected Francophile and former chairman of the public television network, says much the same when he warns: "Watch out! The boycott could hurt Australia more than France."

But Actu, a powerful trade union confederation, is pushing for an extension of the boycott "against French companies operating in, or exporting to Australia", whatever the cost. The dockers' union is holding up French ships by working to rule. Since June, 40 ships have been affected. John Coombs, leader of the dockers' union, says it is a straightforward question of morality. "It's not difficult to organise the boycott. We identified South African products and chased them out of Australia."

The businesses most affected by the boycotts are French bakeries and restaurants that have been in Australia for a long time. The manager of the Prunier restaurant, Rémi Bancal, has cut his staff's working hours. "There's a kind of social pressure," he said. "Businessmen don't dare bring their clients into a French restaurant."

Claudette Delbarre, whose restaurant in the centre of the city is identified by the French tricolour painted on the door, has lost half her customers. Last week, she found "Down with the French" daubed on her door.

The pressure is also being felt by Australian industrial bakers using French names. Au Bon Gout, for example, has been boycotted. Some shops have craftily decided to disguise their French cheeses as Swiss or Irish products.

The anti-nuclear protesters at the "peace camp" don't intend to budge from their vigil until the tests are over. With their mattresses and blankets, they occupy the square in front of the ANZ Bank where they have opened an account for the funds they collect. They have done a deal with the police who let them use their loud-hailers for 15 minutes at a time. Even the guards of the building have bought anti-nuclear T-shirts.

The peace camp activists urge motorists to sound their horns as they drive past the consulate. Passers-by are advised to throw any French products they may have into a bucket kept for the purpose. There were a few Bic lighters, odd pieces of lingerie and partly used tubes of cream in it. People can also add their signatures to protests against French and Chinese nuclear tests, against the sale of Australian uranium to France and even a petition claiming "independence for Tahiti".

A collection was made for Frédéric Temauri, a young Tahitian hurt during the riots after the first nuclear test. Within the space of 10 days, 16,000 people signed one petition or another, 12,000 of them against the French tests. Following protests, a version of the French flag adorned with the Nazi cross disappeared from the peace camp. Every time the French test a nuclear device, a protest is routinely called at 5pm.

(October 3)

The new Pimpernel

A harmless impostor has been talking his way into state photographs and garden parties, writes **Jean-Michel Dumay**

AN "historic" picture was taken on May 8, on the steps of the Elysée Palace. Not only was France celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Liberation, but François Mitterrand was about to hand over to his successor as president, Jacques Chirac.

The gathering consisted of some 40 heads of state and government, plus members of royalty. Those present included the Duke of Edinburgh, Germany's Chancellor Helmut Kohl, the US vice-president Al Gore and the Senegalese president, Abdou Diouf.

But, as in one of those "spot-the-mistake" pictures, another face could be seen beaming at the cameras from behind the two French presidents, that of 64-year-old Claude Khazizian. After a career working for the national tote office, Khazizian spends his retirement indulging in his favourite pastime: rubbing shoulders with celebrities.

"Monsieur Claude", as he is familiarly known in official circles, is proving a nightmare to the presidential security services. They are amazed at his Scarlet Pimpernel ability to be here, there and everywhere.

He popped up again on July 14 in Place de la Concorde, walking hot on Chirac's heels as he left the official stand. "May I congratulate you, sir?" he inquired, before shaking hands with a rather startled-looking president. The whole scene was filmed for the purposes of a television programme which wanted, among other things, to test the Elysée security services.

It has to be said that the tall Khazizian, with his double-breasted suit, red pocket-handkerchief with black polka dots and tightly-rolled British-looking umbrella, looks the part. His smiling joviality is the key to his success. As he says, quoting La Rochefoucauld: "To establish yourself in society, do everything you can to look established."

The elegant Khazizian gate-crashes all the best banquets, inaugurations, open days and cocktail parties. He says he has already attended four garden parties at the Elysée without being invited.

He has also been spotted at the Cannes film festival, walking down the steps next to Michael Douglas and standing behind Sharon Stone. He mingled with official guests after the final stage of the Tour de France cycle race one year, greeting the winner Miguel Indurain and chatting amiably with someone he describes as "a charming young woman" — the Infanta of Spain.

"May 8 was a great day for me," he says. "France had a new president and was celebrating the Liberation. I approached the presidential palace and . . ." In next to no time Khazizian was drinking to the Estonian president's health in the Elysée gardens in the company of the Kazakh and Armenian presidents. "It was a Krug Grande Cuvée. Divine. We discussed Estonia's problems."

Monsieur Claude is a highly cultured and articulate man with a knack of saying just the right thing at the right time. "When the photo call came, I just trooped along with everyone. I couldn't backtrack. It was all a bit chaotic. No one knows who is who, and everyone thinks you belong to the party. My heart missed a beat, I can tell you. Abdou Diouf remarked on the fact that I was taller than him. I found myself standing behind Mitterrand and Chirac."

Then it was time to sit down to lunch. Khazizian peered intently at the seating plan, then sat down with great aplomb at a separate table where the VIPs' escorts eat. It was at that point that the security men began to twig. But it was an inopportune moment, and too late to do anything that might cause a rumpus.

After enjoying lobster, accompanied by "a symphony of baby broad beans and gratinéed oysters", and free-range Loué chicken washed down with a 1945 Mouton-Rothschild, Khazizian strolled out of the Elysée Palace deep in a conversation about life and death with the eminent heart specialist Professor Christian Cabrol.

When a photographer asked him who he was, a voice came from behind him: "Armenian delegation." "There's your answer," Khazizian said with a chuckle — he is indeed of Armenian origin.

Khazizian is skilful enough to be photographed in the company of VIPs. "You can't say you've succeeded in life until you've become a president of the republic," he says, roaring with laughter.

Khazizian, who came from a working-class background but was brought up by a bourgeois godfather, started his career behind the window of a betting shop, then rose to executive status.

"Wherever you go there are barriers — 'artistes only', 'members only', 'no admittance' and so on," Khazizian says. What I liked about working in a betting shop was the democratic side of it all — you'd get a managing director queuing behind a road sweeper."

He does not regard himself as an impostor, just as someone who gets "to the heart of the action and makes his childhood dreams come true". And his dream now? "To get into the popemobile."

(September 23)



CLAUDE KHAZIZIAN (seen left between Chirac and Mitterrand) poses on the Elysée steps with the great and the good, *writes Michel Guerrin.* "It's one of the funniest pictures I've ever seen," says Goksin Sipahioglu, head of the Sipa photo agency. "We regularly get pictures of unknowns managing to pose next to film stars, but it's unheard of for anyone to get in on a photo call of heads of state."

Almost all the agencies have the same picture, or a similar one, in their archives: the VIPs invited to the Elysée on May 8 were snapped by a large pack of photographers. But no one bothered to find out who the man in the second row was.

No one, that is, except Reuters. "We can't send a picture out to the papers unless everyone in it has been identified," the agency says. "That unknown face really stymied us, so we went back to the Elysée after lunch and managed to catch him as he came out. He told us his name was Claude Khazizian. That's how he now appears on our computer files."

The history of photography is littered with pictures that have been tampered with for political purposes. The most notorious are of Mao and Stalin, with personalities being added or erased depending on their state of grace. The faking was mostly crude. Nowadays, with digital images, such tricks are child's play.

But the May 8 pictures of Khazizian cannot be fakes. He appears in too many photographs taken by too many agencies for there to be the slightest doubt. Sipa's archivist is already looking forward to trawling through the agency's collection to see if she can unearth other pictures of the man who claims to have gate-crashed four garden parties at the Elysée.

(September 23)

French industry loses faith in Europe

Uncertainty about the single currency is bad for business, reports **Martine Orange**

"ITS TOUCH and go," says Jean-Louis Beffa, head of the French industrial giant Saint-Gobain. "Either we succeed within the next few months in laying the foundations for a single currency, which will result in great prosperity for Europe, or we fail and Europe will begin to disintegrate." Like the great majority of French industrialists, Beffa has been only too aware in recent months that there is a spanner in the European works.

Such fears were merely confirmed by recent tough talk from the German finance minister, Theo Waigel, about the possibility that Italy might have to be excluded from European monetary union in 1999. There have been major clashes at regular intervals in the history of the construction of Europe. But this time, say French industrialists, the crisis is more serious.

Except for the multinationals, which have for years operated on a world scale, French companies see Europe as a natural opening for an extension of their activities. Spurred on by the single market, they have worked hard in the face of competition. "All those efforts will come to nothing if the single market is not complemented by a single currency," says one head of a medium-sized mechanical engineering company.

That view is echoed by most company directors. They see the devaluations in 1992 and 1993 of the pound, lira and peseta as having resulted in an intolerable distortion of competition.

The car manufacturers Peugeot and Renault are selling at a loss in Italy; the automotive equipment maker Valeo puts sales lost as a result of monetary fluctuations at several hundred million francs. Mechanical engineering, textile and shoemaking companies say they have lost between 10 and 20 per cent of their market share to Italian, Spanish and British competitors.

They regard Waigel's idea of restricting a single currency to a small core of countries that meet the Maastricht criteria as unfair. Referring to the founding principles of the European Union, they point out that a single currency that included neither Spain nor Italy, which was in from the start on the creation of Europe, would be a stunted currency.

Their stance is also based on solidly realistic economic considerations: the inclusion of the largest possible number of countries in monetary union is in their view the firmest, if not the only, guarantee that competitive devaluations will be limited, if not prohibited, and that the majority of EU members will be subject to the same economic, monetary, budgetary and commercial rules.

It is true that no decisions have so far been made as to the relations that might exist between European countries which have a single currency and those which do not.

French industrialists are unhappy about the European Commission's obstinate refusal to take into account the industrial consequences of monetary disruptions. A recent Brussels report claimed, for example, that the devaluation of weaker currencies had caused no major distortion at macro-economic level between the various countries, and that as a result the introduction of compensatory measures could not be justified.

'To renegotiate the Maastricht treaty would be like opening Pandora's Box'

In French business circles the worry is that when monetary union is implemented in 1999 the Commission may adopt the same blinkered attitude and leave the excluded member countries to juggle with their currencies.

Taking its cue from Waigel's remarks the Federation of German Industry suggests that, in order to include the greatest number of countries in a single currency, it would be better to postpone the date for its implementation.

That suggestion exasperates the French. "The Germans don't want a single currency — they've already got one: the deutschmark," says Bernard Terrat, chairman of a textile-machine manufacturing company. "They are laying down the law and building up a position of strength without any benefit to ourselves. I'm in favour of a different monetary policy, less closely tied to Germany's."

Even the most pro-European company chairmen admit to having been "perturbed" by the Bundesbank's proposal to bring down public-sector deficits to 2 per cent instead of the 3 per cent set by the Maastricht treaty.

Keith Richardson, secretary general of the European Round Table, a body that includes 46 heads of major European industrial companies, thinks that for a single currency to work the system must be a sound one, even if it means postponing implementation for a few months. "But to renegotiate the Maastricht treaty would be like opening Pandora's box," he says.

Industrialists are no longer convinced that a common European will exists. Some of them suspect governments of using the pretext of a possible renegotiation of Maastricht to ease their budgetary constraints, knowing they have the support of voters who are now sceptical about the benefits of Europe in view of persistently high unemployment levels. Others point to the temptation felt by certain EU countries, often new members with no firm commitment to European ideals, to turn the union into a vast free-trade area.

Unice, a body that includes the employers' federations of 24 European countries, thinks that a disaster is unlikely because political, economic and strategic interests are apparently much stronger than the forces that could cause a EU break-up.

"The trouble is that Europe always thinks it is alone in the world," says Richardson. "While we're hammering out an agreement among ourselves, the world is changing at top speed. No one seems to realise that the ability to act and adjust quickly is the key to industrial competitiveness."

The financial cost of the European crisis is weighing heavily on companies. On top of devaluation and the shortcomings of a not yet firm single market, uncertainty is a major hindrance which makes industrial decision-makers reluctant to invest. Many of them are beginning to wonder whether they may not have put too much of their money on Europe.

(October 1/2)

Change of guard at the Habsburg palaces

Emmanuel de Roux reports on the policy of ownership in former communist regimes

FROM the end of the 17th century to the beginning of the 20th century, Bohemia-Moravia (the present-day Czech Republic), Hungary and Slovakia lived in the shadow of the dual Austro-Hungarian monarchy of the Habsburgs.

From one end of the former empire to the other, just before the first world war, all railway stations bore the emblem of a two-headed eagle against a yellow background; all government employees wore the same uniforms and spoke the same official jargon.

And all the huge estates dotted over that cosmopolitan jigsaw puzzle of an empire belonged to the same families — Esterhazy, Schwarzenberg, Sternberg, Lobkowitcz, Karolyi, Kinsky and so on — who over the years had constructed gigantic châteaux on a par with their wealth.

That rich heritage, which was hard hit by the demise of the empire in 1918, was entirely nationalised when the communists came to power after the last war in Hungary and Czechoslovakia.

The governments that succeeded the communist regimes in 1989 were soon faced with the question of what to do with all those hectares of roofs and kilometres of corridors. Should they be returned to their former owners, put up for sale, entrusted to local authorities or kept in government hands?

In 1991, Prague decided on a policy of restitution. "It was a question of justice," says Czech culture minister Pavel Tigrid. "The property was stolen in 1948 and had to be returned to its rightful owners." But only Czech citizens and residents were eligible; and the nationalisation date had to be after 1948. That excluded property confiscated between the end of the second world war and the *coup d'état* of 1948, on the grounds of collaboration with the Nazi occupant. Most "German" families, or those thought to be German, were thus excluded.

The number of former owners involved is considerable, and there has been much fighting over the spoils. A protracted legal battle over one piece of property is under way between Karl Albrecht Waldstein, a descendant of the famous general of the Thirty Years War, an heir to the Rohan-Sykhrov estate and a branch of the Lichtenstein family.

On the other hand, 25,000 hectares have already been returned to Prince Schwarzenberg, 2,000 to Jiri Lobkowitcz, 6,000 each to the two Kinsky brothers, and almost as many to the Kolowrats and Mendsorff-Pouillys.

This so-called "return of the feudal lords" has caused some resentment. So far 180 medium-sized properties comprising historic buildings and 20 large estates have been returned to representatives of the former landowning aristocracy. It is probably no coincidence that the families concerned are those who in 1938, just before Munich, sent a letter to the Czech president, Eduard Benes, assuring him of their support in the face of the threat from the Third Reich.

"These restitutions are dangerous," says Kamila Matuskova, head of the Czech Heritage. "Some owners, when they get their property back, are tempted to sell it immediately to foreigners."

Two hundred of Bohemia's and Moravia's 2,000 châteaux have been returned. The state wants to hang on to just over 100, about half of them directly run by the culture ministry and the other half by regional governments.

The remaining 1,700 belong to local authorities and former nationalised companies or collective farms, all of which are entitled to sell them. Several buildings have already been sold several times over.

The conversion of a manor house into a three-star hotel or international conference centre looks very attractive on paper, but is difficult to bring off. "We need money to restore our heritage," says Karol Dyba, the Czech Republic's ultra-liberal economy minister. "That heritage can help the country's economic development. We're therefore forced to compromise." The state spends 300 million crowns (£8 million) a year on this heritage-in-limbo, in other words a pittance.

In Slovakia the situation is rather different, even if restitution officially has the force of law because it was voted in before the country split from the Czech Republic in 1993. Most of the big landowners were of Hungarian origin — until 1920 Slovakia was part of Hungary, which later became an ally of Nazi Germany. There is no question of handing back an inch of Slovak land to those former "collaborators".

The influential Catholic church has, on the other hand, succeeded in retrieving most of its property, as have the banks. So far the state has privatised 2,900 of Slovakia's 5,000-plus historic buildings; 1,400 still belong to it and almost 900 to local authorities.

Since the 13 million crowns (£350,000) raised by a support fund for the upkeep of the 12,000 listed "objects" (which range from altarpieces to medieval castles) is manifestly inadequate, new owners have to be resourceful.

But resourcefulness often precludes respect. An owner who breaks the rules laid down by the historic monument department risks little. "A fine of 1,000 crowns (£25)," complains Renata Lieskovska, an architect with the department.

"The regulations governing new building are much stricter than those which apply to renovation," says Peter Kresanek, mayor of Bratislava. The only salvation for such threatened buildings is of course tourism, but that presupposes conversion, which is sometimes insensitively done, or investment.

The consumers' co-operative that has bought up the baroque chateau of Mojmirovce has gone for diversification. The building now comprises a training institute, a late-night bar, video game arcades, a swimming pool with a wave machine, an education centre for the unemployed and, of course, a hotel.

In Hungary, which boasts some 10,000 listed monuments and 10,000 châteaux, parliament has ruled out restitution, preferring instead the principle of privatisation, which is helped by the fact that many historic buildings were long ago placed in the hands of state enterprises.

THE neo-classical château of Szerégelyes, a few kilometres from Budapest, belongs to the state-owned tyre manufacturer Taurus, which is now in the process of privatisation. Originally used as a leisure centre for company employees, the building has been turned into a comfortable hotel. But it first had to be completely restored, as it was badly damaged during the second world war.

Other monuments have not been as lucky. Many were bombed, looted of all their furniture, then turned into hospitals, barracks or warehouses. Fertöd, the Hungarian Versailles and former property of the Esterhazys, one of the richest families in Europe at the turn of the century, cuts a fine figure when seen from afar.

The walls of this majestic late-17th century palace were restored a few years ago. But the roof leaks, most of the windows have been bricked up, and the floors are rotten. The local council which owns Fertöd wants to sell it, but there are no takers.

Gödöllö, a baroque folly, is even bigger, with its 17,000 square metres of floorspace, not counting outbuildings and stables. It is a virtual ruin. Occupied by the Soviet army until 1990, then turned into a petrol depot and old people's home rolled into one, its huge buildings are open to the elements.

Located some 30km from Budapest and in the process of being engulfed by graceless suburbs, Gödöllö is one of the 207 buildings the government wants to save. Built shortly after the Turkish defeat, it was home of several Austrian kings.

Gödöllö was in the thick of the abortive revolution of 1848. Those wounded at the battle of Sadowa were treated there; the Empress Sissi stayed there, and the poet Alexander Petofi mused there. It was at Gödöllö that Charles 1, the last sovereign of the dual monarchy, made one last attempt to preserve the unity of the empire. Admiral Nicholas Horthy lived there until 1944.

The government wants to turn Gödöllö into a large museum coupled with a luxury hotel and exhibition galleries. Initial work will require 2.5 billion forints (about £2.5 million), but not a penny of that sum is available. Private investors are in no hurry to help either.

Although the Hungarian state refuses to return property, it does, under certain conditions, allow it to be turned into "cultural foundations" when the suggestion comes from wealthy — or shrewd — former owners who want to find their roots again. Negotiations are under way with representatives of the Karolyi and Nasdasdy families for the châteaux of Fehervarcsurgo and Nasdasladany to be handed over to a foundation for 99 years. The cost of restoration would be borne by the families concerned.

As though the situation were not already complicated enough, the historic monuments department wants to take away from local authorities certain buildings which ended up in their hands (sometimes against their will), while the same authorities have their eyes on more profitable buildings which slipped through their fingers.

Occupants, who are not always owners, want to milk the historic value of monuments for all it is worth, while the state tries to get preservation orders implemented, though it has no power to impose them. This absurd imbroglio may sound the death knell of Hungary's heritage, which is one of the richest in central Europe.

(September 9)

Fertöd, the Hungarian Versailles, is up for sale but there are no takers

PHOTOGRAPH: ANDRAS BANFUTI

France and Spain battle for Guernica

Philippe Dagen

AN EXHIBITION entitled "Face à l'Histoire" is scheduled to be held at the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris at the end of next year. It will explore the relationship between art and politics from the inter-war years to the present day.

Among the works the curators would like to borrow is one of the most famous modern paintings in the world, Guernica, which Pablo Picasso painted in response to a bombardment of civilians during the Spanish civil war. But the request has caused controversy in Spain.

Shortly before handing over the French presidency to Jacques Chirac in May, François Mitterrand wrote to King Juan Carlos to inform him of the request for a loan. The letter was passed on to the curators of Madrid's modern art museum, the Centro d'Arte Reina Sofia.

The curators said they were against the idea of moving the painting and claimed that it could not be rolled up for transport because of the fragility of its painted surface.

The culture minister, Carmen Alborch, chose to take no decision herself, and left the matter in the hands of Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez. Gonzalez has not yet made his decision known.

The technical arguments advanced by experts at the Centro d'Arte Reina Sofia, which have been widely reported in the Spanish press, do not strike specialists in such matters as insurmountable.

Always supposing that Guernica cannot be rolled up — though it did travel in that state when it was handed back to Spain by the New York Museum of Modern Art in 1981 — there would be no problem in transporting it on its stretcher from Madrid to Paris, whether by air or by road.

Other reasons may explain the reluctance of the Madrid curators. It could be seen as inopportune on Spain's part to lend Guernica to France in the light of the resumption of French nuclear testing in the Pacific, particularly as the painting has come to be seen as one of the symbols of the pacifist movement, even if Picasso had something else in mind.

After being appointed head curator of the Prado Museum in Madrid by the Republican government, Picasso painted Guernica in his studio in Paris. He conceived it not as a manifesto against all wars, but as an angry protest against the massacre of civilians by Nazi aircraft acting on behalf of General Franco's forces on April 26, 1937.

Guernica, a symbol of the struggle against dictatorship, was exhibited in the Spanish Republican pavilion at the Universal Exhibition held in Paris that same year.

The history of Guernica, then, has a strong French flavour. If the Spanish end up refusing to lend the painting, it will be a bitter pill for the French to swallow.

(October 1/2)

Le Monde

Directeur: Jean-Marie Colombani

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
October 15 1995

There's no place like home

Richard Doughty discovers that soggy sliced bread is just one of the problems encountered by foreign students coming to Britain to study English

AS HUNDREDS of thousands of overseas students do battle with the English language in schools dotted across the UK, many face a struggle with a culture for which they are totally unprepared. Misunderstandings can occur which, if not sorted out, can ruin a student's trip.

Much of this is a result of false perceptions and expectations of British families and the way they live. Last summer in a college in Kent, a Middle East student in his forties wrote before his arrival to request an orthopaedic mattress, a family willing to discuss the day's news, no pork in his diet and no alcohol. Then, after his second day in England, his host rang the college welfare officer to say he wouldn't eat the food she'd cooked for him. In fact, he had bought some food and asked her to cook it for him.

The college solved the problem by the student taking evening meals at the college, where he could try out the food by eating a little at a time, and only take breakfast with his host. "They later got on like a house on fire," said his welfare officer. "He had just not got on with the food." EFL (English as a Foreign Language) communities can be close-knit — when a Japanese student was shot dead in the United States some three years ago after mistakenly entering the wrong house in fancy dress on the way to a Hallowe'en party, and did not understand the word "freeze!", the US became a no-go area. After immediate widespread media coverage the Japanese cancelled their courses wholesale and the US was decreed "unsafe".

So concerned has the UK EFL industry become to improve students' perceptions, that four leading organisations commissioned research among foreign students to determine what they felt were the most important factors in their stay. They found that, although EFL courses were heavily praised, what concerned students was the quality of host families and welfare during their stay.

In a 1993 British Tourist Authority (BTA) report based on feedback by overseas travel agents, French agents cited cases of two students of the same mother tongue living with the same family, lack of attention to guests by host families with few opportunities for English conversation, and problems to do with food. According to the research: "The Italians have a phobia about British packed lunches (which they consider to be soggy sliced bread and chocolate biscuits) but are happy to eat them if they contain wholesome things." Using this information, Arels (the Association of Recognised English Language Services, representing some 250 private schools), Baselt (the British Association of State English Language Teaching, representing colleges and universities running recognised EFL courses), the British Council and the BTA questioned 750 students on their expectations of a stay in England.

A majority (71 per cent) cited as "very important" the time a host family spent with them in English conversation. Other features rated very important included the family's welcome, a place to study in peace and not having another student with the same mother tongue in the same family.

As a result, Arels and Baselt have produced a Homestay code of practice. Since its launch earlier this year, some 20,000 certificates have been sent out to host families who have signed the code. It has also been sent to 1,000 overseas travel agents and tour operators. The eventual aim is to make it mandatory and promote it as an international quality assurance scheme.

Arnout de Waal, principal of the Cambridge Academy of English, has been a prime mover behind the code. His school, like the other 300 or so other schools and institutions in Arels and Baselt, has an accommodation and welfare officer who selects and closely monitors host families. What the code will do, he hopes, is put off families who want to make money by having people stay in their homes. "It will make them realise that they actually have to devote time to these people."

But, as he points out, thousands of students go to unrecognised schools. While most maintain adequate standards, there are no regulations to bring rogue schools into line. Most accommodation officers can cite at least one horror story — in one north London case, for example, students were merely given accommodation address lists.

The difference is that the recognised schools are required to have someone on hand to sort out any problems. Other schools ring up potential hosts to take students without first having visited the family.

Christine Juste, welfare officer at Excel English Language School, an Arels member based in Muswell Hill, north London, welcomes the code of practice but says it is what her school has been doing for years. Even for the recognised schools, though, with their regulations and accommodation officers, matching students to families is often difficult.

IN Christine Juste's experience, some 20-30 per cent of students don't like pets, yet "trying to find a family without pets is very difficult". Turks do not allow dogs into their homes, and one Belgian girl told her hosts it was abhorrent to allow them into bedrooms.

Then there is the problem of baths. "Some cultures think it disgusting to lie in one's own dirty water," says Excel accommodation officer Margaret West. "Without a shower, there is no way they can wash their hair. Some students want three showers a day." Host families need to be warned about wide cultural differences to avoid misunderstandings. Excel's leaflet on hosting Japanese students points out that they will wait for permission or an invitation to do most day-to-day things in a host's home.

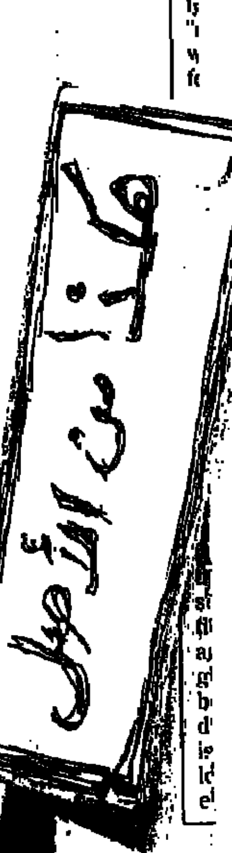
Some countries insist on certain hosting rules. The Thai embassy, for example, stipulates that Thai girls are not allowed to be placed in a family that has boys over 12 under the same roof.

Mary Kirby, welfare officer for the Lewis school of English in Southampton, believes the code of practice helps gives host families the recognition they are due. "It's the first time that it is now official, a case of them recognising us." Like many new directives, the code will take time to become familiar to overseas agents and students. Students generally could do with more information about their host families. Masako Hashiguchi, aged 22, from Japan, said she was very nervous before coming to the Harven School. Her travel agent had given her no idea of what to expect from a host family and she was not shown a video of Harven produced by the school.

Agencies should also be clearer about the true nature of an English family. "Another part of the problem is that people abroad think of an English family as a white, married couple with two kids," says Arnout de Waal. "But that is not a typical English family. There is a wide ethnic spread, single parents and so on. We're interested in a warm, welcoming atmosphere where students get a lot of English and interest and care. That's the important thing — and for that you need standards."

For further information on EFL courses useful contacts include: Association of Recognised English Language Services, 2 Pontypool Place, Valentine Place, London SE1 8OF, tel: (+44)171-242 3136; and the British Association of State English Language Teaching, Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education, Francis Close Hall, Swindon Road, Cheltenham GL50 4AZ, tel: (+44)1242-227099

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The Guardian Weekly

French without too many tears

Enrolling on an intensive course can be exhausting but very rewarding, as **Patrick Ensor** found on a trip to Belgium

THE FOUR most frightening words in French are *A vous la parole*. Or so I imagined on the first evening I arrived at Château Céran in Belgium. My last formal acquaintance with French was 30 years ago when I passed French O level. Since then, my vocabulary seems to have shrunk to about 100 words, just about enough to navigate around the basic needs of a holiday in France.

Yet here I was, standing in a circle with 26 other newcomers to a week's intensive language course, being invited to speak, to say who I was, and why I was here. In French.

The philosophy behind Lingua Céran is to immerse students in their chosen language of study from the moment they walk up the steps to this comfortable château near Spa, in the Ardennes, until they emerge, blinking and nearly brain-dead, the following Friday. French is the only language spoken from *Bonjour* at breakfast to the merciful release of *Bonsoir* as you head for bed.

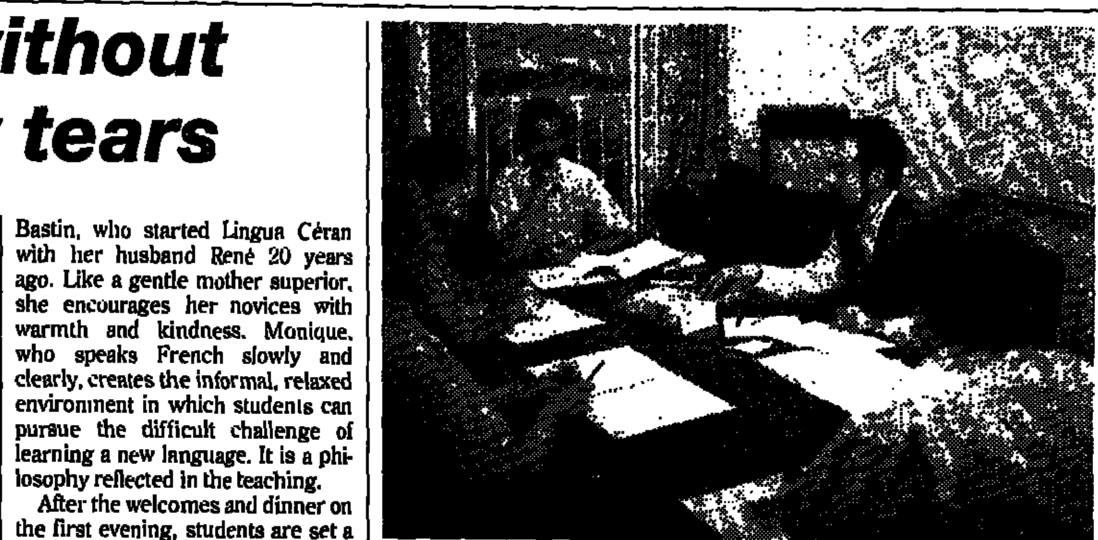
Unlike the total immersion approach of, say, a Berlitz course, where the teaching is intense but the evenings are free, Céran's permanent staff and full-time teachers are there throughout the day, during meals, and in the evening to coax students into conversation.

The sense of being part of a large family is reinforced by Monique Bastin, who started Lingua Céran with her husband René 20 years ago. Like a gentle mother superior, she encourages her novices with warmth and kindness. Monique, who speaks French slowly and clearly, creates the informal, relaxed environment in which students can pursue the difficult challenge of learning a new language. It is a philosophy reflected in the teaching.

After the welcomes and dinner on the first evening, students are set a test to assess their knowledge of French grammar. The test is designed to reveal both level of competence and gaps in knowledge. Students at roughly the same level (on a scale from 1-6) are then made up in classes of three or four.

After a comprehension test the following morning, Marion, our young teacher, announced to our class of four — a journalist, two businessmen, and a language student — that our week's task was to perfect our concordance of tenses, and to improve ways of asking questions, both areas where our tests had revealed us to be weak. A good grounding in French syntax is quite properly regarded as essential to good speech.

But the Céran method also sets out to get students to speak, which, after all, is why everyone is here. Each day, as homework, we were asked to prepare stories with a moral theme — "The day I had to say sorry" yielded a few wry tales — then take turns in class to tell them. Marion would meanwhile be noting our mistakes. After everyone had made amiable fools of themselves, she would gently point out our errors and get the class to repeat better, more idiomatic phrases, concentrating on those areas deemed in need of improvement. At the end of each class she committed *phrases trésor* (key phrases) to a tape for us to practise later.



Bespoke service . . . afternoon sessions at Château Céran are designed to bring together students who share a common aim

Those who take the Céran Lingua course are highly motivated. Many are business people who need French to communicate with colleagues or clients. Others need it to qualify for university entrance in France. Teaching staff play close attention to individual needs, and the afternoon classes are designed to bring together students who share a common aim, whether it is to master the art of diplomacy or drive a hard bargain.

But it is the camaraderie at mealtimes, during coffee breaks and in the evening that gives Château Ceran its special appeal — or torture depending on your point of view. Because the Céran philosophy is based on fellowship, students are encouraged to take part in evening activities, even it is only to listen to a talk on the superiority of Belgian chocolate.

The highlight of the week is dinner on Thursday, the last evening together, to which outsiders are traditionally invited. Often they are neighbours prepared to put up with a sticky social evening in return for a good meal. Students are allocated guests, whom they are asked to greet, ply with drinks and generally entertain. The first test of hospitality comes at the start of dinner, when students are asked to stand up in front of 60 or more people and introduce their guests. At that moment "*A vous la parole*" is as much a measure of students' confidence as of their new-found language proficiency.

Later, in yet another circle of fellowship, students take turns to say what they gained from the course. Those who start with little or no French tend to make astonishing leaps in five days; others, like me, with enough French to appreciate how little they know, can be afflicted by modesty. But, looking around and listening to others seizing on *la parole*, it was clear that most of my fellow students had made significant gains in both fluency and vocabulary. And made new friends into the bargain.

Personalised tuition comes at a price

RENÉ and Monique Bastin started Lingua Céran 20 years ago after returning from 10 years' educational work in Africa.

Since then they have chalked up 28,000 graduates and started or licensed several other schools, including another French centre in Provence, a centre in Spain, and two English centres, one in Ireland and the other in the United States.

In addition, Château du Haut-Neubois, near Château Céran, offers courses in various European languages and caters for youth groups.

According to Dirk Van Nieuwenborgh, Céran's commercial director, up to 90 per cent of students are sponsored by their companies or government (Germany sends its diplomats to Céran for nine weeks' language training).

The personalised tuition Céran offers does not come cheap — a week's course costs between £1,500 and £2,000, but includes bed and full board — yet it has not stopped Céran growing throughout the recession-hit nineties.

Mr Van Nieuwenborgh puts Céran's success down to word-of-mouth and expects to report a 24 per cent growth in numbers at all centres in 1995.

For further details, contact Céran Lingue International, Avenue du Château 16 - B-4900 Spa, Belgium, tel: (+32) 87 79 11 22, fax: (+32) 87 79 11 88

CLASSIFIED

What kd does best

Former Nashville girl and now a lesbian icon, kd lang has a new album out that more than proves her vocal talent, writes **Veronica Lee**

FOR SOMEONE who has just released only her fifth major-label album in nine years, singer kd lang attracts a lot of attention.

lang's career so far has looked like the path taken by a drunk driving a Ferrari. Now acknowledged as having the best set of pipes in the business, lang, 33, may be accused of being something of a dilettante: she started as a performance artist in her native Canada, then spent a few years playing cowpunk — rockabilly music with a punk attitude. In 1985 she was signed to Warner records by Seymour Stein (the man who discovered Madonna) and her music changed to more refined new country. But lang lacked the big hair, big breasts and a small mind to make it in Nashville. Although she later made Shadowland (a well-received tribute to Patsy Cline made with the dead singer's producer, Owen Bradley), the town gave lang the cold shoulder.

In 1992 came a major change of musical direction with lang's Grammy award-winning Ingénue, charting an unrequited love affair, which sold massively and gave her mainstream success. A few months after the album's release lang gave her most acclaimed performance yet — she became the first lesbian rock singer to come out publicly.

The announcement was met by an avalanche of media attention, culminating in the famous Vanity Fair cover of lang, dressed in men's clothes and lying in a barber's chair being "shaved" by model Cindy Crawford (also rumoured to be gay), dressed in a teddy and high heels. Suddenly lang was a hot media item and overnight became *the* lesbian icon, a dykon, if you will.

Sarah Pettit, editor of American gay magazine Out, explains why lang was such a media hit: "Straight women were gushing that she was the lesbian they could consider sleeping with, straight men were saying they had finally found an attractive dyke and gay men responded well to her strength as a woman.

"But," she adds, "lang got completely overrun with it." As for many before her, coming out was a heady liberation and lang perhaps enjoyed the attention too much. She spent most of the following two years in LA, was frequently photographed on the town and made regular appearances in gossip columns, her name linked with several famous women, including Madonna and Martina Navratilova.

lang has complained that "the media think all famous lesbians must be sleeping with each other". Her friendship with Navratilova is close, though; they share a love of Harley Davidson motorbikes and lang flew into London just to watch the tennis star's last attempt at the Wimbledon singles title in 1994.

lang enjoys a close relationship with her fans, too. Her assistant has been seen discreetly shepherding young babes — blonde and lissom — backstage. lang now says she hopes to settle down with, get married to even, "the girl next door" — which, for every dewy-eyed dyke in her audience, translates as "me".

Raised in Consort, Alberta, lang was the daughter of a teacher and the town pharmacist. She always felt an outsider: as a tomboy in a town of just 650 people, it's not difficult to see why. Then, when she was 12, her father, to whom she was very close, deserted his family, an experience which lang says sent her into shock and about which she has only recently been able to talk.

Looking back, it's difficult to understand why lang was ever in the closet at all. Out to her family and friends since her teens, her sexuality was an open secret in the industry and few would fail to guess from the way she looked.

Such rare good feeling towards a star is due to lang's engaging charm — she has it by the bucketload and, along with a ready wit and a drop-dead smile that could turn a straight woman at 20 paces, it captivates practically everybody who meets her, male or female, gay or straight. A (straight female) journalist explains: "I left feeling I had got the interview of my career — kd made me feel so special. Then I discovered she'd given the self-same interview — the same jokes, the same anecdotes, even the same flirting, for God's sake, to everybody. But even though she's an expert manipulator, I can't help liking her. I think we all fell in love with her."


No more blues . . . 'coming out was a heady liberation' for kd lang

AFTER a rare experience of failure — in 1994 her soulful soundtrack to Gus Van Sant's Even Cowgirls Get The Blues bombed along with the film — about a year ago lang decided she was sick of the LA scene, and needed to re-evaluate her life. She abandoned a planned film project, moved back to Vancouver and started work on a new album with her longtime collaborator Ben Mink.

The result is All You Can Eat, lang's most finely crafted work yet. Gone are the metaphors and allusions of previous work, to be replaced by her most direct lyrics to date, and her first which are gender-specific. The quality of her songwriting has come on in leaps and bounds, and some constructions would grace Cole Porter or the Gershwins.

The quality of the album raises the question of whether coming out liberates an artist. Anger and experience fuel most creative endeavour and, the theory goes, if you are in the closet you write out of anger and pain. Can coming out affect the quality of an artist's work?

"Everyone's agreed that lang and Melissa Etheridge were more cool, more calm and less awkward when they came out, but does it make them a better singer or a better guitar player? I don't think so", says Sarah Pettit.

Much rides on the new CD as, in a sense, this is the first "real" kd lang album. Perversely, her coming out could hurt sales; fans and the music press, liberal to their rocking roots, may have given lang support in the past due to her sexuality. From now on she stands or falls by the same standards applied to other stars.

"I want it all," lang sings on the last track. Judging by the quality of the new album, it is hers for the taking.

Piquant flavouring

ROCK
Caroline Sullivan

THE Red Hot Chili Peppers were extravagantly described as "the biggest band in the world" by a rock magazine recently. "The biggest punk-funk band in America" would be more realistic, but the Los Angeles foursome could well be bound for dizzier heights. One of the first bands to have married loose-limbed dance grooves to hard rock, the Peppers have been at it for 11 years now.

The latest album, One Hot Minute, is their biggest yet and London's Brixton Academy was consequently so brimming with body-pierced humanity there was barely room to sweat. It must have been just as hot on-stage, for within minutes of arrival, the group had stripped down to brief shorts, singer Anthony Kiedis divesting himself of a perfectly cunning maid's uniform. (The Chili Peppers are famous for disdaining clothing in a notorious publicity shot, they posed nude save for strategically-placed sports socks.)

Onstage, Flea's lumbering-then-lithe basslines catch you right in the solar plexus. There were numerous heated instrumental dialogues between Flea and guitarist Dave Navarro, the former favouring a soulful style, the latter determined to rock the joint down. Navarro got his chance on several of the One Hot Minute numbers that formed the bulk of the set. The best was the Flea-sung Pea, which started with a hoarse, a cappella "I'm a little pea, I love the sky and the trees" — typical Chilian sardonicism — and dissolved into cacophony.

The audience's fervour underscored the depth of their affection for the band: the cackling, jiving Peppers prove it's possible to be 30, act 16 and get paid handsomely for it.

Viking blood and a splash of brine

TELEVISION
Nancy Banks-Smith

AS HANCOCK vibrantly put it in The Blood Donor: "British blood! Undiluted for 12 generations. One hundred per cent Anglo Saxon, with perhaps just a dash of Viking." That dash of Viking lifts the whole concoction, like Worcester sauce in tomato juice.

So how can one account for Sandi Toksvig, whose blood is virtually 100 per cent Viking gore, and clearly fed up to here with the sea.

In Island Race (BBC1) Toksvig and John McCarthy have been limping round Britain in a sailing ship, the Hirta. Everyone seems increasingly weary and wet and seasick and homesick with the exception of the skipper, who is in love with Hirta, ("the essence of her, the depth of her joy is her absolute simplicity").

It had seemed like a good idea in Beirut. "During my captive years," said McCarthy, "my dream of freedom had been set at sea like this, on a boat like this, on a day like this."

It rained and blew and hailed. Sandi kept pumping away to keep the show afloat till you could have throttled her. By the time they were blown back to Orkney they were, as Coleridge put it, a ghastly crew.

McCarthy said: "I've never seen Sandi so exhausted that she's actually lost her sense of humour. I'd be concerned about her but the fact is I'm just too tired to care." Sandi said: "They used to say, 'Excuse me, Sandi.' Now they just stand on the side and do the business."

At this strikingly low point in their fortunes they met Dean, a panel beater from Glossop, his family and his spotted dog. They were looking over a small island, the Holm of Grimbister, with a view to buying it. Grimbister, once the fog lifted, looked just the way it sounds. The wind came at you like a lunatic with a carving knife and Dean's wife clutched her cardigan around her.

Dean was circular and unsinkable like a life belt. He inspected the ruinous croft cheerfully. The shattered windows were tied up with barbed wire. Grass colonised the roof. There was, Dean said, a lot of scope. A couple of good years on it and you'd be sorting it out. He'd get his Dad to help him with the electrics. (If you want to know what happened then, a Welshman bought the island and Dean bought a farmhouse on Orkney. No Scots applied.)

There's trouble at t'pub. Last night Bet, the landlady with the leopard bustier and lemon soufflé hairdo, read that The Rovers Return was being sold. She stood like a soufflé turned to stone. Her friend's assurance that you can't always believe what you read in the papers carried little conviction. Roy Hattersley has been writing about it for months.

Coronation Street has had two memorable landladies as the country has had two great queens. All others are just parsley round the plate. Annie Walker and Bet Lynch took the Rovers on a big dipper ride. Annie tirelessly tried to raise the tone of the place by hitting each aitch hard on the head with an invisible hammer. Bet Lynch lowered the tone with a bump that woke armadillos snoozing on Peruvian pampas.

Front runners for the job are the ladylike Liz McDonald and the raucous Vera Duckworth. If it were a slanging match with Dennis Skinner, my money would be on Vera, but the big dipper may be on the way up again.

Nannies (Channel 4) had a small selection of tales to raise the hair on your neck. "I sacked her for being untidy. About six weeks later I got the phone bill. By then I had found the psychotherapy notes under her mattress. The phone bill was for £800." Every call was to the Samaritans.

The trials of Jason and Frances of Putney, new parents looking for a nanny for Josh, were minutely documented. They reminded me somehow of Paul and Primula, a terribly nice couple entirely unprepared (according to Patrick Campbell) for the arrival of Nurse Foley from Tralee, a Mrs Gamp figure with a lurid line in gynaecological anecdotage and eye-catching sky blue bloomers.

Nowadays nannies seem like children themselves, vague or rapacious or irresponsible. "I don't", said Jason with a titch of tetchiness, "understand where we've gone wrong." It might, of course, be the television camera. I would rather be interviewed with a tiger in the room.

You can do a very credible impression of Rolf Harris by just gazing like a friendly dog. A little fast. There, Rolf to the life. Shaggy, stable, he is the making of the phenomenally popular **Animal Hospital** (BBC1). When a woman was told her hamster had to be put down she turned to Rolf, his arm went round her and she wept bitterly on his shoulder.

A sick animal is strangely dignified and patient. The owner is full of distress and affection. "This", said Delphine, fishing a hen out of a basket, "is Clare, my chicken. She flew in two-and-a-half years ago and she roosted in a tree. She's wild and she kind of eats peanuts."

Emotions chased across the vet's face like clouds.

"And she sat on my lap all yesterday because she just doesn't know where her feet are. She walks on her toes as if she got Parkinson's and her tail, which is normally a beautiful fan . . ." She picked up Clare's dejected tail and fanned it like a pack of cards.

Poor Clare. The vet gave her a multi-vitamin shot and said, "Come back next week." I can't wait.

The poor relation has the last laugh

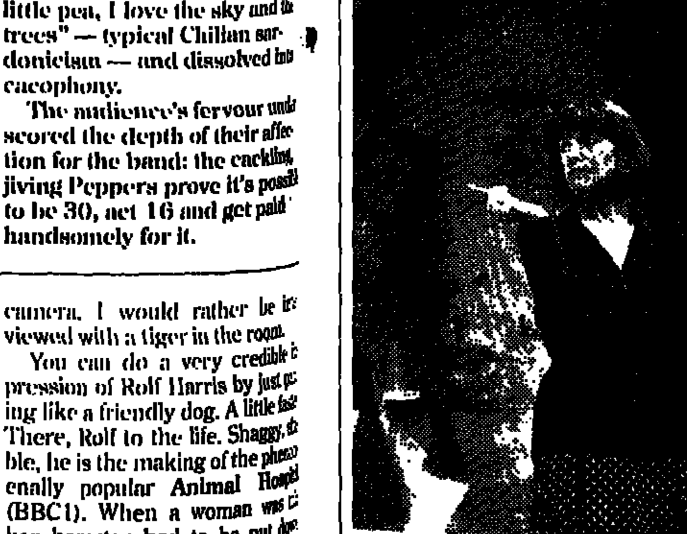
THEATRE
Michael Billington

WHAT DO Ray Cooney's **Funny Money** and Terry Johnson's **Dead Funny**, two plays currently running in London, have in common? Obviously the desire to make us laugh. Also the shrewdness — like the movie Funny Bones — to announce their intention in the title. But the real hidden link is Henry McGee.

In Cooney's new play he appears, quite brilliantly, as a hapless suburbanite bullied into impersonating an Australian sheep-farmer; and in Johnson's play he makes the most famous non-appearance since Godot as he fails to arrive at a wake for Benny Hill, whose straight man he was for 20 years.

But, in one vital respect, the two plays are very different. Funny Money is a farce while Dead Funny is a comedy. Definitions of the two genres tend to disappear up their own semantic tail. I would, however, suggest that farce is an elaborate mathematical construct with the sole aim of inducing laughter while comedy presupposes a vision of life and an underlying moral purpose.

Even that broad distinction is open to objections. Eric Bentley, in his famous chapter on farce in The Life Of The Drama, suggests it has a subversive intent: that it is an enactment of our wish "to damage the family, to desecrate the household gods". But the real reason, I suspect, we enjoy Feydeau or Cooney is the combination of algebraic plotting and whirlwind panic. Whereas comedy, whether it be by Congreve, Wilde, Ayckbourn or Johnson, aims through laughter to shift our perspective and rearrange our consciousness.


Belinda Lang in Terry Johnson's comedy Dead Funny

Funny Money and Dead Funny support my argument. Cooney's play is about a Fulham accountant who accidentally picks up a briefcase full of gangster's loot. He decides to abscond to Spain with the money but his getaway is thwarted by the separate arrivals of two policemen. In desperation, he passes off some neighbours as visiting relatives from Australia — different ones to each cop — until the stage teems with mistaken identities.

I suppose you could, at a pinch, see Cooney's play as a wicked satire on modern greed and suburban fantasies of Barcelona, Bali and wife swapping. But the pleasure lies in the mechanism. But we're so busy keeping up with the plot we sometimes forget to laugh.

Cooney and McGee are among the non-arriving guests at Terry Johnson's Dead Funny which now appears at the Savoy totally recast and looking funnier than ever. It also fulfils my working definition of comedy in that it makes us rethink our own attitudes.

On the one hand it pays tribute to the heroism of stand-up and the eccentric English comic traditions. At the same time, it examines the sexual chauvinism that underlies that tradition and implies that it both reflects and shapes men's attitudes towards women.

But Johnson also shows that comedy, unlike farce, has the capacity to hit two emotional buttons at once. There's a classic example when Brian, co-founder of the Dead Funny Society and beautifully played by Sam Kelly, decides to come out as gay. On the one hand, it is deeply moving because it shows the courage still required in our hypocritical society by a working man to declare that he is gay: it is also, in the dramatic context, very funny since Brian, who is camper than a row of tents, scarcely poleaxes anyone with his news.

Dead Funny also demonstrates the very English impurity of genres. But, although it uses elements of farce, it does so in a carefully-motivated way. Towards the end of the play there is a wild custard-pie throwing sequence which is both parody Benny Hill and a release of the overpowering domestic tension Johnson has created. I was reminded of a similar sequence at the end of Carry On Loving where ill-matched couples at a wedding feast likewise daub each other with pies. But, where in the movie it looks like slapdash slapstick to provide a rowdy finale, Johnson gives it a precise dramatic meaning.

Farce or comedy? To me, they are not antithetical but complementary. Farce, through its jet-propelled panic, can achieve a delirium that is the quintessence of theatre. Comedy, while borrowing qualities from its supposedly lowbrow sister, can do more to change hearts and minds. But, rather than create a hierarchy of genres or set farce at war with comedy, I suggest we abandon our built-in snobbery and learn to cherish them both.

Alf Garnett's **Lear** — Warren Mitchell will, I'm sure, forgive the identification with the tetchy old git he played for 24 years — is a triumph of actorly skill, experience and intelligence over audience preconceptions, *writes Robin Thornber.*

This unconventional casting is not, perhaps, as surprising as it seems. Jude Kelly's reign at the West Yorkshire Playhouse has been marked by her producer's skill at making this sort of connection.

Mitchell, at the almost Learlike age of 69, combines a virtuoso display of histrionic know-how, with a performance that is also deeply felt and carefully thought through.

It's such a big, powerful performance that he his fellow actors look like walk-ons. Not one of Lear's dangerous daughters, looked capable of fiddling an office sweepstake, let alone taking over a country.


Paul Cézanne's Les Grandes Baigneuses, his masterpiece lent to Paris by the National Gallery in London

Cézanne fever grips Paris

WHAT COULD become the most popular single-artist impressionist exhibition of the 20th century opened in Paris this month with the first Cézanne retrospective since 1936, *writes Paul Webster.*

The collection of 109 paintings at the Grand Palais near the Champs-Elysées has already set the record for the most publicised French homage to a single painter with the publication of at least 50 new books or re-editions, supplements in all the magazines and newspapers, a deluge of CD-Roms and hours of television and radio previews.

The exhibition, put together with London's Tate Gallery and the Philadelphia Museum of Fine Art, could attract even more visitors than the 793,000 who went to the Renoir retrospective in the same gallery 10 years ago. More than 735,000 queued to see a Manet retrospective in the Grand Palais in 1983, but, apart from the impressionists, Cézanne's popularity could also surpass that of Salvador Dali, whose show at the Pompidou centre in 1979 was seen by 840,000 people.

It took four years to assemble Cézanne's oil paintings and about 70 drawings and watercolours for an exhibition which recalls the 100th anniversary of a Paris impressionist exhibition in which Cézanne's talent was finally recognised by a wide public.

The painter was then 56 years old and died 11 years later.

Françoise Cachin, director of French museums, said it was unlikely that a retrospective on the Grand Palais scale would ever be shown again. It includes both versions of the Grandes Baigneuses from Philadelphia and the National Gallery in London.

"Nobody for 60 years has seen a collection of works that show his lifelong evolution as an artist," she said.

A po-faced Pocahontas

CINEMA
Derek Malcolm

POCAHONTAS is the only Disney animated feature about a real person and the most coherent attempt yet by the studio to make a politically correct one.

The result is ambivalent, since the real story of this daughter of an American Indian chief is not told. Pocahontas became Lady Rebecca Rolfe, travelled to England with her merchant husband, and was presented at the court of King James before she died of cholera, aged 20, in Gravesend.

The fake story, as told by Disney, is less fascinating. This Pocahontas, drawn less like a Barbie doll than usual, is a free-spirit who falls for John Smith, the captain of a shipload of settlers and bravely prevents a war between the Brits and the Injuns when he's captured. Her tribe is presented as a bunch of happy natives living in an idealised New World, disturbed by Brits searching for gold.

There is less sheer fun to be had and fewer Disney show-stoppers than usual. Admittedly, Pocahontas is accompanied for much of the film's journey by Meeko and Flit — not a brace of American Indian lawyers but a raccoon and a hummingbird who get up to all kinds of amusing tricks for the benefit of kids who get tired of the love story. Even so, after the visual splendours of Aladdin, Beauty And The Beast and The Lion King, this seems a little weary.

The would-be settlers get along with the Indians better than those later Americans who, among other enormities, left cholera-infected blankets in Indian settlements in order to wipe out the inhabitants. Still, it's difficult to make an animated feature based on truth that can appeal across the board to six-year-olds and their grannies. One might have hoped for more character detail and a greater sense of fun, but this is po-faced Disney, which draws the New World nicely but badly misses the colourful nonsense that we love even as we sneer.

Stunts, shoot-outs and a certain amount of computer wizardry seems obligatory nowadays. It is the be-all and end-all of Irwin Winkler's **The Net**, in which Sandra Bullock, the rising star of Speed and While You Were Sleeping, proves that she is not yet good enough to hold a film on her own without the saving grace of a strong male lead.

She plays a reclusive hunter for computer viruses in Southern California whose clients' computers suddenly get infected by a mysterious bug. No one can assist when the poor woman becomes a non-person, with a new name, a house for sale and a criminal record. Even the FBI agent she turns to is fraudulent and her therapist ex-boyfriend (Dennis Miller) succumbs to an altered medical prescription.

The Net is nothing more than an old-fashioned thriller decked out in fashionable new clothes which proposes the oldest of clichés — that computers and software are likely to become increasingly dehumanising.

Cheik Doukoure's **Le Ballon d'Or** (The Golden Ball) is charming — the tale of a young Cameroon boy who wants to become a famous footballer and in the end gets taken on as an apprentice by the French team St Etienne.

Made shortly after the Cameroon team reached the quarter-finals of the World Cup, it shows in its spare and effective structure how much Doukoure has benefited from his French experience as an actor and screenplay writer.

Leap to the beat

MUSIC
Michael Ellison

DRUMMERS do not get a good press, in as far as they receive any attention at all. Their plight is best explained by a joke. What do you call a bloke who hangs around with musicians? A drummer.

Ichiro Inoue has not heard the crack before and he doesn't think it's very funny. But then, as the leader of Wadaiko Ichiro — a troupe of drummers who come on like Cozy Powell-meets-Bruce Lee — he wouldn't.

But Ichiro Inoue has managed to make a 75-minute mass drum solo interesting. The group, whose unamplified sound is louder than a rock band, have just embarked on a nationwide UK tour. They bring the conventions of pop to their performance, swirling and twirling to the rumble, leaping about in headbands and karate kit.

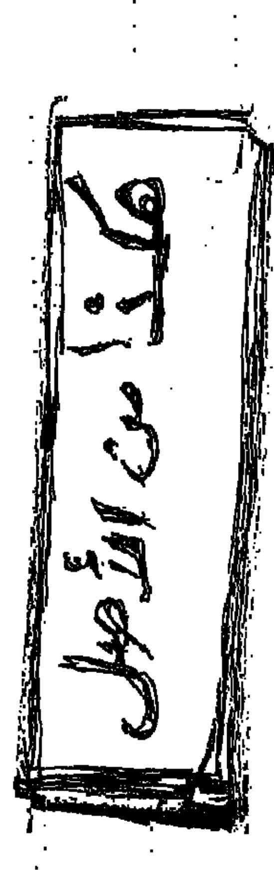
Huge drums weighing up to 450kg are thrashed with incredible dexterity by 11 men and two women wielding sticks the size of baseball bats. The nearest thing to melody comes with the occasional intervention of a flute, the odd tap on a gong and a touch of xylophone during the encore.

Communication between audience and performers is instant — with the sense that the fundamentals of this most primitive of sounds could be attempted by anyone with an arm. Percussion is the same in any language, though only a few can make it sound this fluent.

They filled a tent with 1,500 people each night for a week during the Galway festival. But, despite their background, the drummers are not exactly big in Japan. Wadaiko Ichiro play together at home only rarely.

"In the past 10 years people have started to discover their own culture again," said the 32-year-old leader, who is his group's oldest member and composes and arranges all the music. "But in their normal lives drumming is not very important."

So the troupe that can play across Europe for seven months and in front of thousands in a town of only 50,000 on the west coast of Ireland do not have an agent in Japan. And they recorded their CD in Amsterdam.



The war that Spain tried to forget

A new film has inspired veterans of the civil war to speak publicly about the true story of their struggle, writes **Jonathan Steele**



On the front line . . . Ken Loach's Land And Freedom is playing to adoring crowds in Spain

"I *WAS* amazed and scandalised when I first saw it done," George Orwell revealed, soon after he reached the front line in the Spanish civil war. The "it" was the way both sides would spend much of their energy shouting propaganda across the trenches. Men with the best voices would be given megaphones to ensure their slogans reached the fascist lines.

"Such a proceeding does not fit in with the English conception of war. The idea of trying to convert your enemy instead of shooting him! . . . It made us feel that the Spaniards were not taking this war of theirs sufficiently seriously," Orwell wrote in Homage To Catalonia.

Sometimes the slogans hurled at fascist conscripts were political: "Don't fight against your own class". Often it was just abuse: "fascist idiots". One man took direct aim at the soft underbelly of enemy morale. "Buttered toast!" he boomed. "We're just sitting down to buttered toast over here. Lovely slices of buttered toast!" In Land And Freedom, Ken Loach's new film about the Spanish war, there is a similar scene. But this time it's an Irish volunteer, not a local Spaniard, who shouts across the trenches, and his invitation to the fascists to desert their posts is more proletarian. "The food here's fucking brilliant," he yells.

Ever since its appearance in 1938, Orwell's memoir of the civil war has been a model for generations of British foreign correspondents, and not just because of its sharp evocation of the unromantic confusion of war. Orwell's stance and tone seemed to represent an ideal. There is emotion, even anger in Homage To Catalonia, but it is heavily outweighed by Orwell's sardonic, low-key, Old Etonian detachment. Take that telling phrase — "this war of theirs". Moreover, if the book has a prevailing mood, it is a very English attitude of mild pessimism.

That is the last charge which could be laid against Loach. Optimism and political engagement shine through all his work, one of the reasons, perhaps, why he continues to be so much more warmly acclaimed on the Continent than in Britain. At Cannes this summer, Land And Freedom won the International Jury Prize and Loach was greeted by adoring crowds. In Spain, where the film was released in May, thousands of people, mainly young, have been besieging the movie-houses to uncover the secrets of what their grandparents really did in the war.

The film is the nearest thing to an epic that Loach has made. The hero, David, is not a middle-class journalist à la Orwell, but an unemployed youth from Liverpool, who joins the first stream of volunteers going out to Spain after Franco's mutiny against the elected Republican government. This was before the fully-fledged International Brigade was set up. "We wanted him to be working class, and not an intellectual," says Loach, "because in the popular conception it was [people such as] Orwell — artists and writers — when actually it was mainly working-class lads who went there."

Strictly speaking, Land And Freedom is not about the civil war at all. It is subtitled "a story of the Spanish revolution" and only covers a few months in Barcelona and the Aragon front in 1936. This was the period when grassroots resentment at the feudal institutions of Spanish society, the army, the church and the big landlords, was bursting uncontrollably to the surface. Factories and large estates were spontaneously collectivised by their workers. Church property was ransacked or seized. When Franco launched his counter-attack in July, hundreds of young Spaniards joined militia brigades in which the traditional rank structure of the army was thrown out of the window, women carried rifles on a par with men, and everyone called their officers "comrade".

Like the other foreigners who dropped into this chaotic environment, David stares with amazement at first but is soon infected by the climate of freedom and equality. Orwell wrote: "Human beings were trying to behave as human beings

By a quirk of history anarchy put down its deepest roots in one of Europe's least industrial countries

and not as cogs in the capitalist machine". The camaraderie and enthusiasm as people discover a world of alternatives give the film its emotional force — plus, of course, the questions which loom larger as the film reaches its climax. Was the revolution viable, or was it betrayed?

The Republican side eventually lost the war in 1939 after Britain and France insisted on "non-intervention", even though Hitler and Mussolini were openly helping the fascists. But in Loach's analysis, the cause had already been betrayed by June 1937, when the communists gained the upper hand within the disparate movements of the left. Land And Freedom's central theme, which emerges in the second half of the film, is a betrayal within a betrayal.

Stalin, who had tight control over the Spanish communist leadership via his many agents in Barcelona and Madrid, wanted to reverse the revolutionary advances. He hoped that a moderate form of Republicanism would gain more support from the Spanish middle class and make the Soviet Union more acceptable as an ally for Britain and France. The communists in the Popular Front government started a campaign of repression against the anarchists and the activists of the revolutionary militias, known as the Poum. The stuffing was knocked out of the revolution.

Many Spaniards are still stunned that it has taken a foreigner to lift the veil so dramatically on their own past. Until shortly before Franco's death in 1975, any positive treatment of the Republican cause was obviously taboo. The surprise is that the transition to democracy in the two subsequent decades has not produced any extensive re-writing of history. An embarrassed silence is a fairer description of what happened. The day on which the Republic was proclaimed in April 1931 is not officially commemorated in today's Spain, nor is the installation of the Popular Front government (a coalition of republicans, socialists, communists and syndicalists) in 1936. If you go into any bookshop in Barcelona and ask for books on the civil war, they refer you to foreign authors like Hugh Thomas or Raymond Carr. School textbooks peter out with the first world war.

Enric Casanas, an elderly anarchist, now pushing 80, is a wild fan of Loach's film. But he is deeply scornful of the Spanish communists, whose soft tactics since their return to legality after 1975 has done little to help their electoral fortunes. "We never had a rupture with Francoism, as the Germans had with the Nazis after the war," he says. "Our transition was an arrangement. The communists, when they came back, did not demand major changes in the textbooks. They wanted to be accepted by the powers that be." His bitterness is a key part of Loach's film just as it was of Orwell's Homage to Catalonia. The seeds of the anti-Stalinism, which was later to produce Animal Farm and 1984, were planted when Orwell saw the Spanish communists in action in 1937. Loach's anti-Stalinism is also deep-seated, which is, he says, another reason why he wanted the film to have a proletarian hero who would start out as a member of the Communist party and gradually change his views. In a provocative scene towards the end of the film, David tears up his party card.

No group is more delighted with the film, for obvious reasons, than the small cohort of ageing Poum and anarchist activists who still live in and around Barcelona. Loach and his team consulted many of them to get the authentic story. Driven into exile like the rest of the left after the fascist victory, fewer of them returned with democracy, apparently fearing that communist hegemony on the left would deny them a voice. The irony is that in the 1930s the anarchists were more numerous than the communists. It is a quirk of European history that anarchy put down its deepest roots in one of the Continent's least industrial countries. Even today, Spain's main trade union organisation, the CNT, is a successor of the anarchists. One reason for their strength was their energy in setting up alternative schools, known as *ateneos*, and promoting adult education in a heavily illiterate society.

In a book-lined apartment in the holiday resort of Sitges, heavily shuttered against the blazing sun, Victor Alba steers me to a seat close to his left eye. The right one has not worked since childhood, a handicap which kept him in the offices of La Battalla, the Poum newspaper, rather than joining the fighting at the front. He came from a middle-class Republican family and was in high school when the King fled Spain in 1931. "Class distinctions in those days were very visible. People dressed differently, spoke differently, reacted differently. It was natural that middle-class kids would be attracted by the ateneos. This phenomenon of workers educating workers was going on all over Spain. I found it exhilarating and stimulating."

He remembers the way the people took the factories into common ownership after Franco announced his mutiny in July 1936. "Owners just abandoned their factories. The problem was who would pay workers their wages. The workers' assemblies simply decided to take them over. Although a quarter of all males over 15 were in unions, it wasn't the unions who decided. The ateneo tradition worked." The same happened in the countryside.

After the fascists won, Alba was arrested and jailed until December 1944. He walked across the Pyrenees to France, took a boat to Mexico, and eventually ended up teaching history at Kent State university in Ohio, where he co-authored his main work, Spanish Marxism Versus Soviet Communism. He retired in 1982 and returned to Spain. "The communists didn't want Poum people to come back. They said I was a CIA agent. I asked a student why he thought so. 'Because you taught at an American university.' That was all!" Poum militants such as Alba argued that the revolution and the civil war must go hand-in-hand. Without the revolution's social advances and its collective decision-making, people would not be motivated to fight. "Our strategy was to compensate for lack of weapons with enthusiasm, sacrifice, and voluntary discipline — what the others called voluntarism," Alba recollects.

The communist argument was that victory over fascism must come first. The struggle was between fascism and democracy. Only later could one talk of revolution. The passion of the split still rages today. A group of International Brigade veterans, mainly with communist sympathies, was invited to a preview of Land And Freedom in London. Afterwards, they rounded on Jim

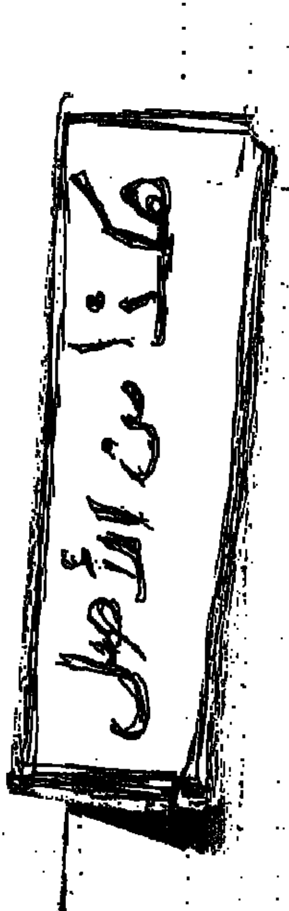
'I hate to say this but if the communists had won the war, not one Poumist would have been left alive'

Allen, the screenwriter, and Loach himself. The film focused on a tiny part of the war, they said. It pretended the Brigaders were dupes of Stalin. It implied that arms were deliberately held back from the revolutionary militias by the communists when in reality everyone was without arms until aid from the Soviet Union started to arrive.

"Many people who were in no political party before the civil war joined or identified with the communists because the Soviet Union provided the only arms we had. When our lads, who'd had rifles dating back to 1890, were given a Soviet rifle, they said 'Good Old Joe'," said Bill Alexander, leader of the British Battalion, to Loach. The Spanish people also felt gratitude to the Soviet Union, which was one reason why the communists, who had got a negligible score in the 1936 election, later grew rapidly. "We were never stooges of Stalin, because what was happening in Spain fitted in with our own experience." The angry veterans concluded that the Poum had opted out of the combined struggle by trying to advance its own agenda, and Loach's argument about betrayal was therefore a travesty. One veteran even said he hoped his grandchildren would not see the film.

With hindsight, many on the left have argued that if the world had supported the Republican side with sufficient arms to defeat Franco, the second world war might never have started. Parallels are made with the current war in Bosnia. Interestingly, this is no longer the view of the historian Eric Hobsbawm, who was

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The war that Spain forgot

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never a Poum fan and took the communist line at the time. In Age Of Extremes: The Short 20th Century he still finds the social revolution unleashed in Spain in 1936 "a terrifying episode" since it was "so unstructured". On the other hand, he writes, "contrary to the beliefs of this author's generation, the Spanish civil war and the victory of General Franco, who cannot even be described as a fascist, had no significant global consequences."

Equally interesting with hindsight, the period covered by Loach's film shows the degree to which Stalin subordinated bigger issues to his obsessive feud with Trotsky. Spanish communist leaders, working closely with Stalin's agents from the Comintern, denounced the Poum activists as Trotskyists or even as fascist agents and collaborators. Newly discovered material from the Soviet archives proves that Andres Nin, the Poum leader, was murdered on Stalin's orders. In fact, the Poum was not a Trotskyist organisation. Nin had broken with Trotksy in 1933. We can see now that Stalin's orders to repress the Poum activists was his first export of the purges outside the Soviet Union, a practice he was later to follow in Eastern Europe. (The surviving British International Brigaders were not involved in repression.)

At 80, Joan Rocabert still kits himself out in a smart blue safari suit and carefully strokes his strong white hair with the pride of one who led a centuria, a group of 10 activists and 90 volunteers in the militias. It is his memory of being arrested when the regular Republican army disarmed the militias which laid the basis for the climactic scene in Loach's film. "If the communists had won the civil war, not one Poumist would have been left alive," he says. "Under the fascists at least we could change our names and hide, and thus survive. I am sorry to have to say this."

For Pilar Santiago, another Poum militant, her second worst memory is the charge that the Poum collaborated with the fascists, an accusation she heard on a local radio station at the time. "We found it was being broadcast by Poum people who had gone over to the communists — typical Stalinist smear tactics." A catch still comes into her voice when she recalls the worst thing, her first husband's death in 1937. A Poum activist, he was sent with two comrades on a mission to the front. All three were shot. She is convinced the communists killed them. The next day she was arrested and detained by the communist police chief of Barcelona. She was saved by an uncle, a general on the eastern front, who sent her with a group of war orphans to France.

She welcomes Loach's film as a "window of opportunity", provoking a belated historical debate in Spain. Rocabert, too, believes that the tacit agreement not to talk about the civil war after the peaceful transition from fascism after 1975 should lapse now. He is thrilled that young Spaniards are flocking to see Loach's film. "I think I could start a political party based on this. It's generated so much energy and given us a lot of hope. Young people must have hope."

Derek Malcolm will review Land And Freedom next week

Umberto Eco: "I buy treatises, but only if they are wrong'

PHOTOGRAPH: ANASTASSELIS

Date with a conjuror of time

John Hooper finds Umberto Eco pulling paradoxes out of the air at his home in Milan

IN THAT mischievous masterpiece, The Italians, Luigi Barzini wrote: "Reliance on symbols . . . is the fundamental trait of the national character." Certainly, if you were creating a fictional semiotics professor, you could do a lot worse than make him an Italian.

You might hesitate to call your guru of the hidden meaning and elusive resonance anything as implausibly apt as Eco (which really does mean echo in Italian). But if you were to set your novel in Milan, then you would need to give him a flat looking out on to the castle of the cruel Sforzas, near where the wall bears a coat of arms with a twisted serpent.

You would line his study with old books, and scatter his desk with antiquarian booksellers' catalogues. Then you might add a bizarre touch, like the thing in the bottle on one of Umberto Eco's shelves.

White and straggly, it looks like a detail from a painting by Dali or Bosch. Or something a wizard has set aside to grow into an homunculus.

"Those," boomed Umberto Eco, "are dog's testicles. I am perhaps the only man who has ever gone out to buy flowers and returned with dog's testicles." He is a big man with a strong handshake, an energetic stride and his voice — though not particularly deep — is resonant and mellifluous.

"It was one Sunday morning," he continued in his hugely genial way. "My wife said the flat looked a bit sad, and she sent me off to buy flowers around the corner. There was this flea market, you see . . ."

Eco's passion for books is better known than his weakness for canine genitals; it was made clear on the very first page of The Name Of The Rose. But what was his specialism? "Lunatic science," he said. "I buy treatises, but only if they are wrong."

From time to time, he will pronounce what you take to be an immutable rule, which then turns out to be at variance with the evidence of your own eyes and ears. Eco is possibly the world's greatest conjuror with ideas and, as with every great conjuror, it is as well to keep your eyes on the hand that is not holding the wand.

A few seconds later, he pulled down a book the colour of a yellowed pearl. It was written by a 17th century Jesuit from Turin, Father Emanuele Tesauro, who devised a technique for the generation of metaphors. "If you were to write it as a computer program, it would work," said Eco emphatically.

Instead of putting the formula into a computer, he inserted it into his latest novel. The Island Of The Day Before, published in Britain this month, is Eco's first sally into the 17th century. Its hero is charged with helping to solve one of the great cosmological and navigational conundrums of the age.

But why that subject and century? "You know," he said, "the reasons for which you start a novel are always mysterious." Then he launched into the most lucid account of the process I have heard.

"My first problem after the first two novels was: 'OK, I wrote these novels all about culture and books. But would I be able to write about nature?' My wife says I'm insensitive to nature. She grows flowers and so on. But I think I'm also sensitive to nature, though in my own way. So I said: 'Where can I set my story so that my characters will be dealing with pure nature?' A desert island. Shipwrecked on a desert island — that was my first idea. Then I thought: 'Wasn't there a certain Robinson Crusoe who was also shipwrecked?' How about if I had my hero shipwrecked on a ship and unable to reach the desert island? That would be a great symbol — or allegory — of desire, of everything we wished for and didn't get."

At this point, he said: "I bought a watch with the time in all the major cities of the world, and on it there was also the international dateline. We know that this exists. We learn in school that there is a place where it is yesterday and today, but we don't usually reflect on it except when we are crossing the line. So I thought: 'How beautiful it would be to have my character on a ship, in front of an island, but in between them this great metaphysical idea — that the world is not only space but time'."

He toyed with putting the book in the Aleutian Islands. "But what can happen there? In any case, when I write about something I usually like to go there, and I had no wish to go to the Aleutian Islands."

He settled for the South Seas. "And then I discovered this marvellous story of the longitudes, which is wonderful, fantastic. It's true and it took place in the 17th century. Once I discovered this I said: 'OK, I'll set the story in the 17th century.' Moreover, it was a century that had always fascinated me."

THE Island Of The Day Before does not make the same, exhausting demands on its readers as Foucault's Pendulum. Yet, in Italy at least, it has not sold as well. Eco thought this was inevitable. "Foucault's Pendulum was my second novel, after the incredible success of The Name Of The Rose, so there was an unnatural expectation: 'Let's see if he's a one-novel writer.' The media went overboard. The Island Of The Day Before is having a natural life. It started with several reviews, some of them very positive, some of them very negative. And, in the event, it has sold around 500,000 copies in the first year, which isn't bad."

Eco is nevertheless a sitting target for literary hatchet wielders. And, of late, he has been getting it in the neck from several directions.

In the context of Italian modern literary history, he was a member of the so-called Gruppo 63. Having successfully challenged the attitudes and techniques of the post-war generation, its members now find their own attitudes and techniques challenged by younger writers like Silvia Ballestra.

Among his fellow Italian intellectuals, though, Chicken

Eco is probably best remembered for defying the taboo that forbade serious analysis of popular culture. One of his most influential books was an attack on the Marxists' often apocalyptic view of the new media.

Recently, though, he has himself seemed more than a trifle apocalyptic when denouncing the dangers of Silvio Berlusconi and his junk telly. Some commentators have wondered whether his intellectual opponents might not have been right after all. "You must remember that in the fifties, the number of Italians who didn't speak Italian but only local dialect was enormous. Television played an important role. After television, the Sicilian immigrant who arrived in Turin was able to interact on the basis of a common language. That was why we were eager to consider the new media as a phenomenon with many positive aspects.

"I *STILL* believe that was right; that it was our duty not to feel so dandy, so aristocratic, as to refuse to deal with it, but to try to understand what happened."

The dangers against which he had inveighed of late had less to do with the nature of television than with its control. "One of the dogmas of modern democracy since Montesquieu, or before, has been the division of powers: the judiciary has to be independent of the parliament, and the parliament has to be independent of the government. Then, after Citizen Kane, we have the fourth power, which is information, and it too should remain separate."

On the day we met, Eco had been guest of honour at an info-tech trade fair in Milan and had come away distinctly cheered. "I saw some first experiments in interactive TV. On the screen you see, say, Chirac speaking about Bosnia. If you need some more on Bosnia, you click with your mouse and you get documents about Bosnia. Or, if you need more about Chirac, then you click with your mouse and you get a biography of Chirac. In this way, the massive influence of the present TV can be dismantled. At least you are free to escape the influence of the message you can see at that moment, because you can look for other sources of information." He may shrink from being called an "apocalyptic", but he is nevertheless ready to admit to be being "a little more pessimistic".

"The hole in the ozone layer, the destruction of Amazonia, it makes one pessimistic and I think that the duty of intellectuals is to denounce those situations in which we are entitled to be pessimistic. Probably, in all of this, there is a sort of biological reaction. When you're ageing, it's very interesting to find that the world is going from bad to worse and is full of stupid people, so that you are actually happy to leave it: it would be very painful to abandon a marvellous world."

As I closed my notebook, I remarked on the dresser in his sitting room, crammed with apparently ill-assorted artefacts that nevertheless had a distinctly meaningful air about them. "It's like the plot of one of your novels," I said, peering at a tiny sculpture which turned out to be that of a baby curled up in an egg.

"No," he said airily. "My wife decided that anything we liked could go into it, just so long as it was brown." He swept a hand in front of the red earthenware bust, the white clock faces and finally picked up one of several little bottles. Most were brown, but this one was green.

"There," he said with one of his infectious smiles. "Everything brown."

The Island Of The Day Before, Secker & Warburg, £16.99

The guttural muse of County Derry

Seamus Heaney is the greatest Irish poet since Yeats, writes **Blake Morrison**



Heaney: his poems on tribal conflict will remain essential reading

THE only surprise of this year's Nobel Prize for Literature is that it isn't a surprise. Though still, at 56, in his prime, Seamus Heaney has been tipped as a Laureate for some time. His friends Joseph Brodsky and Derek Walcott have both won the award in the past eight years, and as a poet he is at least their equal. He has won most of the honours that it's possible for an English-speaking poet to win. He is highly regarded throughout Europe and in the United States, where he teaches for one term a year. He is one of the few living poets British schoolchildren have heard of. He has done time (five years) as Oxford Professor of Poetry. He has even been on "Desert Island Discs". He is Famous Seamus.

The first time I'd had any appreciation of that fame was in Belfast 15 years ago, when I met Heaney, up from the South for the day, at the railway station. We'd not walked 200 yards before a car screeched to a halt and a taxi-driver dashed over excitedly shouting "Mr Heaney, Mr Heaney" and demanding an autograph. It's hard to imagine this happening when Ted Hughes comes up to London. I was at a dinner for the last Laureate from these islands, William Golding, in a famous London restaurant shortly after his award. No one recognised him.

Heaney's popularity is in part to do with his genial temperament, an odd mix of flickering wit and sturdy rootsiness. Both Prospero and Caliban, he can put a girdle round the world and perform equally well in Harvard seminar rooms, at London publishing parties, in Dublin, Belfast and farther afield. Shy but affable, he is his own best ambassador.

Nice men have won the Nobel Literature Prize before (though not often). What in particular was it that commended Heaney to Stockholm? If the Swedish Academy had to suffer from the same time-lag as we do in the translation and appreciation of foreign writers, it would probably still be coming to terms with his early poetry from the late-1960s, which is loud with the slap of spade and earth. The first poem in his first collection, "Digging" ("Between my finger and thumb/The squat pen rests; snug as a gun"), not only established Heaney as a precocious talent, but pointed to the essential themes he has pursued ever since: blood and soil; imminent violence; a deep awareness of, and awkward squaring up to, his taciturn farming ancestors; self-conscious about writing; a need to dig down, through history and language, to unearth the primal sources of the self. The early reviews of Heaney over-emphasised his rusticity and connections to Ted Hughes. One critic, A Alvarez, caricatured him as a lumbering peasant out of touch with the predominantly urban condition of late-20th century life. His domain was always larger, his demeanour more subtle, and his tone more contemporary than that.

In any case, Heaney has come a long way since the richly sensuous poems of his first two books. His next two, Wintering Out and North, turned their attention to the mouth-music of dialect words and place-names, and to the troubled history of Belfast and the North. Under duress to "respond" to contemporary violence, terrorism and military repression, Heaney proved he could do reportage with the best of them ("Men die at hand. In blasted street and home/The gelignite's a common sound effect"). But he wasn't altogether comfortable with the results, which violated his deeper, instinctual, feminine muse, and at the end he withdrew, "a wood-kerne escaped from the massacre". Field Work, arguably his finest book, written when he'd moved south to County Wicklow, is a further withdrawal, but meditates beautifully on "responsibility", and on the conflicting demands of art and nation. Some of its elegies for dead friends and relations are the finest poems he's written.

In recent years, Heaney has turned to quieter, more domestic themes, back to childhood, and also (at the risk, in the allegorical parts of The Haw Lantern, of a kind of poetic Esperanto) to more universal themes. His range as a poet, translator (both from the Irish and from Dante) and as a critic is now so wide that it's hard to know which elements of his work the Swedish Academy was drawn to, but in a brief commendation, special mention was made of his ability to "exalt everyday miracles". This is an allusion to his most recent book, Seeing Things, which as its title hints, moves beyond literal annotation of the natural world into something more visionary, ecstatic and transcendental.

The triumph of this book is that of someone in mid-life, exultant and exalted, casting off the weight of the past — while also honouring what he's learnt from it:

Heaviness of being. And poetry
Sluggish in the doldrums of what happens.
Me waiting until I was early fifty
To credit marvels. Like the tree-clock of tin cans
The tinkers made. So long for the air to brighten,
Time to be dazzled and the heart to lighten.

If the 18 men and women of the Swedish Academy who choose the Nobel Literature Prize were dazzled by Heaney, it might also be because, alone among 20th century poets, he has written a love poem which compares his lover to a skunk. The skunk was one he'd seen "snuffing the boards" of his back porch in California (where he taught for a year), while he was writing love letters home, and in the poem he connects the creature to Mrs Heaney:

It all came back to me last night, stirred
By the sootfall of your things at bedtime,
Your head-down, tail-up hunt in a bottom drawer
For the black plunge-line nightdress

It takes some effrontery for a poet to use metaphors like that and expect his marriage to survive, but Heaney's marriage, to Marie Devlin, has lasted 30 years and is a very happy one. (They have two sons and a daughter.) It also takes some effrontery to think marital love can be the source for great (and tender) love poetry, but Heaney succeeds.

Cynics will say that — like the awards to Sholokov and Pasternak, Milosz and Seifert — here is another "political" Laureateship, given to Heaney in the year which has seen the peace process on Northern Ireland begin in earnest. Within an hour of last week's announcement, the wires were buzzing with stories of Heaney's alleged keep-everyone-happy chameleon-ism: how, for example, when travelling on the train from Dublin to Belfast he'll switch brands of whiskies at the border. But even supposing the incorruptible Swedes were swayed by extra-literary considerations, the argument is doubtful. In the past, it seemed that the Nobel Committee has harboured a prejudice against politically clamorous or didactic writers, yet in its brief statement it commended Heaney for "speaking out as an Irish Catholic about violence in Northern Ireland".

This view of Heaney, as a writer who does, when need be, speak out, is much nearer the mark than the popular view of him in Britain, which likes to present him as a man who's even-handed, sit-on-the-fence, without affiliations. Certainly, as Heaney himself admits and dramatises in the poems, he was reared on the attitude "Whatever you say, you say nothing", and is all for the quiet life, if he can get it. But take his open letter to the editors of The Penguin Book Of Contemporary British Poetry (Andrew Motion and myself) in 1983. Heaney took objection to being categorised as "British", and, gently biting the hands that had colonised and anthologised him, declared "My passport's green." His letter, all 33 stanzas, is a masterly display of tact, embarrassment, apology and sly wit. But in the end, it firmly insists that names, and nationality, do matter. "British, no, the name's not right./ Yours truly, Seamus". Heaney, in public, is often a mediator, but no slippery mediator could have written that poem.

Take, too, some lines Heaney wrote in North, in 1975, the collection of his which most explicitly addresses the troubles of Northern Ireland. Standing on ground sour with the blood of her faithful, he calls on Tacitus, an early historian of northern Europe's blood-feuds, to:

report us fairly,
how we slaughter
for the common good
and shave the heads of the notorious . . .

In a short book about Heaney some years ago, I suggested that those lines can't and shouldn't be read as cultivated liberal irony at the expense of ignorant hard men. Coming from a Catholic family in County Derry, and having an inherited sympathy with Republican aspirations, Heaney understands that members of the Provisional wing of the IRA, carrying out terrorist acts, might indeed believe they were slaughtering for the common good. For this suggestion, I was castigated by several reviewers. Better that, of course, than that Heaney be hounded by Ulster Protestant extremists, as he occasionally was while living and writing in Belfast. But I still think I had a point. Humanitarian though he is, sceptical of nationalistic fervour and deeply opposed to violence, Heaney understands the gene pool and race-ties, the gnarled roots and ugly bloods of tribal and religious conflict. Though he has moved away into a more personal, religious vision, his poems on such conflict will remain essential reading as long as nations in Europe tear each other apart. It's partly why, deservedly, Heaney is often called the greatest Irish poet since Yeats.

The last time I saw him, [illegible] months ago, he charmed a [illegible]-strong audience of A level students in London with readings from his own work. The Nobel prize-money ($1 million) relieves him of ever again having to give lectures and readings. But he's unlikely to stop, though he needs the private space to write (and will now have even less of it), his work thrives on an intimate, embarrassed awareness of audience. Now that audience, or part of it, has given him the ultimate accolade. It couldn't have happened to a better poet, or a nicer man.

Blake Morrison's books include a study of Seamus Heaney, published by Methuen in 1982

Making Strange

I stood between them,
the one with his travelled intelligence
and tawny containment,
his speech like the twang of a bowstring,

and another, unshorn and bewildered
in the tubs of his wellingtons,
smiling at me for help,
faced with this stranger I'd brought him.

Then a cunning middle voice
came out of the filed across the road
saying, 'Be adept and be dialect,
tell of this wind coming past the zinc hut,

call me sweetbriar after the rain
or snowberries cooled in the fog.
But love the cut of this travelled one
and call me also the cornfield of Boaz.

Go beyond what's reliable
in all that keeps pleading and pleading
these eyes and puddles and stones,
and recollect how bold you were

when I visited you first
with departures you cannot go back on'
A chaffinch flicked from an ash and next thing
I find myself driving the stranger

through my own country, adept
at dialect, reciting my pride
in all that I knew, that began to make strange
at that same recitation.

Paperbacks

Nicholas Lezard

Samuel Beckett: Photographs, by John Minihan (Secker & Warburg, £9.99)

MINIHAN is responsible for some of the most striking pictures of Beckett during the genius's last years; yet how could a photograph of the man, aquiline, penetrating, generous, fail to strike? These 64 photographs (with a passionately intelligent introduction by Aidan Higgins) amount to an iconography, the stations of Beckett's cross including the pissoir on the Boulevard St-Jacques.

From the Beast to the Blonde, by Marina Warner (Vintage, £10.99)

A WRY, elegant and knowing survey of fairy tales from accounts of the Sibyls to Angela Carter, focusing on the way women have been treated ambivalently through the ages: as either seers or scolds, victims or witches. Discursive, but learned and without a dull moment.

The Cure, by Carlo Gébler (Abacus, £6.99)

INCREDIBLY atmospheric and charged novel about the burning of a supposed witch in rural Ireland. Accomplishment in historical fiction is often little more than a matter of getting the tone right, but Gébler's achievement is grander.

Best Poems, and The Book of Five Makings, by Ivor Gurney, ed R K R Thornton and George Walter (Carcanet/MidNAG, £9.95)

A SUPPLEMENT to P J Kavanagh's edition of the collected poems, this volume largely comprises versions and revisions of poems written while Gurney spent his last years in a mental institution. An extraordinary poet: a genuine, original talent.

The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion, by J G Frazer (Papermac, £10)

FRAZER'S own distillation, from 12 volumes down to one, of some of the more unusual examples of sacrifice and sympathetic magic used by various tribes across the globe. Still great reading, but this is just a lazy reprint of a 70-year-old work, unannotated, without any updates, sources, or refutations.

Lean Tales, by James Kelman, Agnes Owens and Alasdair Gray (Vintage, £5.99)

FIRST PUBLISHED 10 years ago as a means of showcasing Scottish talent otherwise ignored by British publishers. We all know what's happened since. Kelman has become a splendidly surly Booker laureate, Gray is an institution, almost, although Owens — discovered in a Glasgow University adult education course — seems to have disappeared. Why? She's terrific.

Ballad of the disappeared

Blake Morrison

The Missing
by Andrew O'Hagan
Picador 244pp £14.99

IN ONE of the Dream Songs, a sequence of poems by the late John Berryman, the troubled hero, Henry, describes a guilt-torn nightmare, a dream of having committed some appalling crime:

But never did Henry, as he thought he did,
end anyone and hacks her body up
and hide the pieces, where they may be found.
He knows: he went over everyone, and nobody's missing.
Often he reckons, in the dawn, them up.
Nobody is ever missing.

It's an extreme version of morning-after paranoia, and one which may be familiar to the young Scottish writer Andrew O'Hagan, who shares something of Henry's (and Berryman's) peeled poetic sensibility. "I've been looking for missing persons, in my own head, for as long as I can remember," he writes. The Missing is an exploration and exorcism of his obsession, a laying to rest both of his dread and of the dead.

Though O'Hagan's book is odd and haunting, it does everything a straight-down-the-line reporter would also do. He visits tracing agencies, cemeteries, hostels for transients. He talks to coroners, policemen, bereaved parents, girls in sleeping bags in doorways. He treks through different times and places in search of the lost, beginning in Glasgow in the 1970s (with a serial killer nicknamed Bible John) and ending in Gloucester in 1994 (with a serial killer called Frederick West).

He wants to understand why people are going missing in increasing numbers, and the feelings which their going missing provokes in others (not least the feeling that it's better knowing someone's dead than wondering if he or she is still alive). But the mad, nagging narcissist in O'Hagan's head requires the answer to another question, a stranger and more metaphysical one: what has all this missingness to do with him?

Perhaps, he suggests, it's to do with his grandfather, lost at sea in 1940, presumed drowned. Though born 28 years later, the grandson grew up with a sense of something "dark and distressing" in his family. O'Hagan was fortunate to be born at a time when the bad old past — his own, Glasgow's — was being swept away. The year-zero optimism affected many people then, including his father, who moved his family to Irvine, an Ayrshire New Town, a place of beginnings, not endings.

But the boy O'Hagan didn't trust the wonky Utopianism. And in 1976 his doubts were realised when a boy disappeared from the estate. There were various theories about the disappearance, but O'Hagan, thinking of the cruel, "slightly deranged Famous-Five-gone-awry" games he and his friends played, nurtured his own: that Sandy may have been killed by other children. Remembering poor Sandy, in 1993, when James Bulger was killed, enabled him to write an article unique, at that time of hysteria, for its level understanding of the ways of children. Other passages here have the same sensuously bleak recall.

Awkward and candid, O'Hagan is an attractive guide on his pilgrimage of the missed and the unmissed, the missing or the merely hiding-out. His vision of modern Britain has the quality of a poetic myth, with himself as Bunyan's questing Christian and the missing as Dantesque souls in limbo, doomed to "wander there, unaccompanied and unknowable, like shadows".

At times, O'Hagan's brooding, elegiac, incantatory note becomes vague to the point of absence, as if he knew something wiser than he means. But he can also be plain and lucid, and there's a kind of epiphany when he meets a woman called Mary Asprey at the National Missing Person Helpline and understands how others concerned with missingness can be busy and practical rather than (as he does) stall introspectively over deeper significances.

In the end, O'Hagan finds appeasement by tracking down one of the women who narrowly escaped death at the hands of Fred West. She is living in Irvine, his home town, which completes the circle, even if it's a circle of hell. Finding her, O'Hagan also seems to find himself. He has found a subject here, too, and made it his own. After The Missing Britain doesn't look quite the same place.

Many of O'Hagan's subjects are anonymous, hidden in plain sight

Dreams that turn sour

Isabel Colegate

The Liquidator
by Ferdinand Mount
Heinemann 212pp £14.99

FERDINAND MOUNT'S last novel, Umbrella, about the Victorian prime minister Lord Aberdeen, interrupted the sequence of linked novels which began with The Man Who Rode Ampersand in 1975, and of which the most recent, Of Love and Asthma, came out in 1991.

In The Liquidator we are back with the slightly nebulous narrator Gus, whose chief function is to bump into people, thus keeping the plot on the move; but if Gus is Jenkins, he is Jenkins through the looking-glass, in a world where nothing is quite what it seems and all is flow and flux and liquefaction.

A tennis club in a north London suburb is blessed by the regular attendance of Tony and Josie, he the gentle protégé of the club's leading spirit, Geoffrey Pagan-Jones, famous liquidator of failed businesses, and she Pagan-Jones's desirable daughter. Misunderstandings arise and the pair fall from grace. They are next seen trying to make a living in the desolate atmosphere of a junkyard on the North Circular Road, from which they proceed to a precarious theatre company on the Suffolk coast, and a social security office in dankest Essex. A metaphor for modern Britain, where everything that doesn't make a profit must be destroyed and the past is concreted over?

Perhaps, but there are other more subtle suggestions. Gus bumps into somebody who knows about Tony's antecedents, and suddenly we are in the Middle East in the 1880s and Tony's grandmother, Beatha, is falling in love with a charming Maronite Christian who is another kind of liquidator, being in charge of the annual "miraculous" release of oil of spikenard from the feet of a statue of Saint Mary Magdalen. Beatha's enchantment does not survive marriage, but Tony, her grandson, becomes the heir to unsuspected riches and takes Josie to live in luxury in Lebanon. That dream, too, turns sour and another kind of liquidator puts an end to it.

Josie, back in London and a widow, takes up with one of her father's more sinister associates, and seems set to become a liquidator herself. Grace, which is quite different from good fortune, comes and goes, whether in the case of Marie Magdalen in the desert or tough Josie with her slight squint and her fatal charm for Gus.

It is a dense novel, melancholy, often obliquely funny, and in some passages, startlingly well-written.

Limited exposure

Tom Lubbock

Untitled: Diane Arbus
Photographs by Diane Arbus
Thames & Hudson 112pp £36

THE TITLES Diane Arbus gave her photographs are usually helpful. They help you gauge her piquant compound of normality and abnormality. Is it a case of supposed normality disclosing deep weirdness? Or is it an acknowledged weird, acting normal?

They let you know the score. Yet the 50 or so photos that Arbus took in her last years, of various people in institutions of care, have stayed untitled because of her suicide in 1971.

It was a distinct project, the most thorough campaign in Arbus's mission to winkle out the weird. As Doon Arbus, her daughter, writes in an afterword to the book: "The photographs were taken at residences for the mentally retarded, places she kept going back to every few months or so, to picnics, dances, on Hallowe'en . . ." But that's as much as you learn about circumstance.

They are ideal Arbus material, Arbus naturals. They offer themselves unselfconsciously, and generally they look god-awful. Please do not call this "disturbing" or a glimpse into the heart of unreason; it's just stupid.

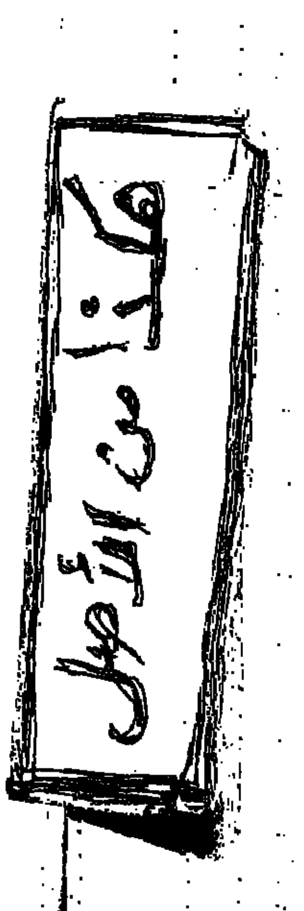
Just occasionally, also, it produces some of her best pictures. The fact that these subjects virtually "Arbus" themselves allows the photographer to drop her guard — her unflinching gaze being a defensive gesture — to get beyond her reactions, and look at someone straight.

But even this good work is undermined by the nature of the project — photographing the subnormal as such, as an abstract and undiscriminated category of being. Arbus isn't interested in individual cases and what each's problems might be. These people have no nurses, they have no families, no place where they live, they're just standing out in fields looking odd.

You can see the point of calling it Untitled: partly to suggest that the subject is quite unnameable; partly because a more definite name would have had to spell out the unreflecting collective noun in the artist's mind.

The photographer can courageously look and gracefully let be only because somebody else is employed to keep her metaphors in reasonable repair, get them out of bed, dress them and wipe their mouths and bottoms.

Arbus's vision was always a holding position, keeping her focus sharp and narrow, of not seeking beyond a certain level of astonishment. This posthumous portfolio shows it at the limit — after which she could only have got wiser.



Chess Leonard Barden

FIDE, the International Chess Federation, is in another crisis. Sixty member nations have demanded a meeting later in the year to discuss a list of grievances ranging from failure to organise the Karpov v Kamsky Fide world title match to "inadequate information flow".

If you believe in conspiracies, then the Moscow pact between Garry Kasparov and Fide's president, Florencio Campomanes, has sidelined KvK while Kasparov and Anand play for the PCA world championship in New York. A Fide-PCA reunification match is scheduled for 1996, and the delay is part of a manoeuvre to force out Kamsky and his volatile father.

However, Fide insiders prefer a cock-up scenario. The world body's management has been preoccupied while moving office from Greece to Switzerland, so has not yet arranged the women's world championship match, Xie Jun v Zsuzsa Polgar, nor the 1995 interzonal.

The sticking point for the Fide world title has been the £550,000 minimum prize fund. Once it is clear that nobody will pay this unrealistic sum, bidding will be opened up so that, at least in theory, traditional events like Hastings or Wijk aan Zee can stage KvK as a sideshow.

Meanwhile, Karpov continues to do what he does best, winning first prizes. His latest success at Baden-Baden was number 134 in individual and team events, an all-time record. The German event was a two-game mini-match knock-out where Karpov was rarely in danger.

Anatoly Karpov-Jorg Hickl, Wade Defence

1 Nf3 d6 2 d4 Bg4 Britain's chief trainer, Bob Wade, who helped Fischer and Short prepare for the world title, has long favoured this method of escaping from book lines and unbalancing the position. His weekly classes at Morley College, London, are among the best for improving players.

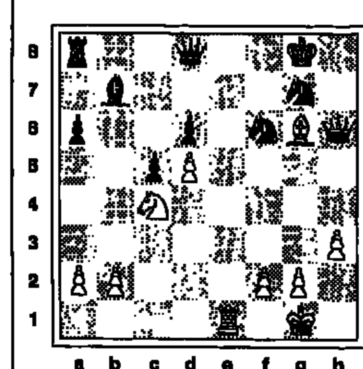
3 c4 Nd7 4 Qb3 Black's chances are improved if he can double White's pawns by Bxf3. **Rb8 5 h3 Bxf3 6 Qxf3 g6 7 Qa3!** Very Karpovian. Any normal strong player would contemplate retreating the f3 queen to d1, e2 or g2, or to attack via f3,g3 or h3. Karpov smells incipient Q-side pawn weaknesses.

Bg7 8 e3 a6 9 Be2 Ngf6 10 0-0 0-0 11 Rd1 c6 Perhaps he could try c5, Ne8-c7, and b5. **12 Bd2 Qc7 13 Be1!?** Another cute waiting move, meeting e5 14 dxe5 Nxe5 by 15 Qxd6 and 13 ... Ne4 by 14 f3.

b5 14 Ba5 Qb7 15 Nd2 c5 16 Bf3 Qa7 17 dxc5 Nxc5 18 Rac1 Rfc8 19 b4 Nb7 20 Be2 White has shuffled his bishops back and forth while Black has made normal moves, but we are only in the early middle game and Black's Q-side is sinking.

bxc4 21 Nxc4 Nd7 22 Qa4 Nxa5 23 Nxa5 Ne5 Suddenly a6 and c6 are gaping weaknesses. **24 Nb3 Bh6 25 Nd4 Qb6 26 Rxc8+ Rxc8 27 Qxa6 Qb8 28 b5 Rc5 29 a4 Kg7 and Resigns.** The white pawns march through.

No 2391



Alexey Dreev v Nick de Firmian, Biel 1995. Tournament winner Dreev (White, to move) has sacrificed a knight for three pawns and an attack, but De Firmian threatens Bxd5. How should the game go?

No 2390: The composer's solution was 1 Qg4 hxg4 (Kg8 2 Rf8+ and 3 Qg6) 2 Rf7 Kg8 3 h7 mate. There are also unintended cooks by 1 Qg2, Qh2, Qh1, g4, which can be stopped by a WP on e4.

Fight for Amestry Woods

Paul Evans

LAST AUGUST, under the clatter of woodpigeons, I scrambled through railings at the foot of an ancient field maple festooned with mistletoe into Amestry Wood. Stately, small-leaved lime trees, growing with ash, oak, cherry and wild service tree in the wood indicate to ecologists that the it is ancient — continuous since at least 1600 and probably much older.

The northern half of the wood shows signs of more recent plantings but is none the less wonderful. On a narrow path winding among the busy rabbit warrens I found what I was looking for: a yellow-painted wooden stake driven into the ground — the Engineer's Curse.

Amestry Wood lies in the path of Worcester western bypass. The lines on the map marking this out had been drawn with numbing arrogance.

Hereford and Worcester County Council propose to slice through the upper edge of the wood and through ponds that are the legacy of 18th century landscaping — a heron haunt where moorhens dither and big old carp slap through waterlilies. But this is not a Site of Special Interest, it is only a Special Wildlife Site. Shame.

Back at the public inquiry in County Hall, people from diverse backgrounds were uniting against a common enemy as they are the length and breadth of Britain. They kept a lid of professionally produced evidence on their boiling frustration and outrage, but only just. Beneath the façade of any public inquiry is a Kafkaesque world of intrigue, scandal, claim and counter-claim, and this was no exception.

A few weeks ago the inspector of the public inquiry announced that the bypass should go ahead. Although opponents were assured that they had a few months' grace to appeal to the High Court, I had a call last week to say that work on uprooting hedges and ash trees on the ancient Lammas lands along the river Severn had already begun. The juggarnaut has been put in motion even before the ink dries on this landscape's death warrant.



ILLUSTRATION: BARRY LARKING

Amestry Wood is only one point on the dot-to-dot progress of the bypass to be contested, which includes historic bridges, otter-haunted riverbanks, and the very landscape that inspired Elgar. The objectors from communities and interest groups have been overwhelmed and under-supported. No one is camped in the wood, there are no barricades. This is the "other Newbury", the forgotten bypass.

So who will stand up for these trees, the wildlife and their habitats? Last year, the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust — still bloody from another public inquiry — claimed it had no resources to fight the corner for Amestry Wood. A spokesman for English Nature told me the wood was too small to deserve statutory protection, too small to waste precious resources on. Although it was a pity the site would be damaged, credibility could not be risked fighting every single case.

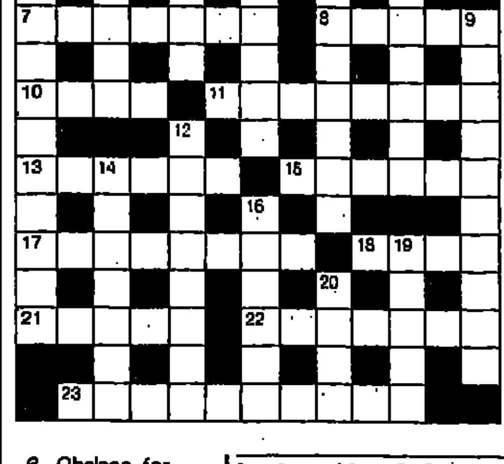
Recently, the Wildlife Trust offered a belated objection to the bypass. But as if changing their minds had somehow devalued their reliability, the inspector ignored it. He also discounted the environmental objections on the grounds that they should have been made during the planning stage.

Amestry Wood is a quiet country mile, as the barn owl flies, from Elgar's birthplace. I wonder what the old boy, who I am reliably informed was a keen cyclist, would have made of all this.

If nature matters, we must stand up for the small, the vulnerable, the particular. Amestry Wood is not big, but it is real. Without proper consideration and support it will be trashed along with countless other wildlife habitats.

Like the rest of the UK roads programme, the Worcester bypass has its own grinding logic. It will eventually complete its orbit around the city, heading north towards the last nesting place of the marsh warbler. Just another small place in the way.

Quick crossword no. 283



Across

1 Censor's instrument (4,6)
7 Omitted (4,3)
8 Claw (5)
10 Accompanied by (4)
11 Art of public speaking (8)
13 Slender sword (6)
15 Sorcery (6)
17 Western — exactly 12 o'clock (4,4)
18 Rabbit's tail (4)
21 "—— in the gold" (5)
22 Bond or insurance payment (7)
23 In the altogether (5,5)

Down

1 Suit (5)
2 Preposition (4)
3 Incongruous or inconsistent (6)
4 System of (eg musical) signs (8)
5 Bad-mannered (3-4)
6 Chelsea, for example (6,4)
9 Eleventh hour (4,2,4)
12 Adolescent (8)
14 Series of tableaux etc (7)
16 Part of ticket or voucher (6)
19 Young person (5)
20 Short sudden movement (4)

Last week's solution

CUBE DRAMATIC
A O E I U R
LOUD BLACKROD
A N P A R N E
MODERATION
I A O E S P B
THRIVE ACCRUE
Y Y E U O E H
GRANDPIANO
P S B L E C L
OUTSIDER SHOD
M A A S E E
PARALYSE WREN

Bridge Zia Mahmood

HAVE YOU ever heard the club expert announce, after playing the hand, "I could have made that double dummy", and wondered what he meant? Well, "double dummy" means "with all cards exposed", and what the expert is saying is that if he had known how the cards lay at the start of the hand, he could have made the contract.

A non-bridge player might expect that being able to see all the cards would enable anyone to make anything. Not so — I have seen countless problems at double dummy which defeat even the greatest players. And there are some mediocre players who can compose and solve the most complex puzzles — I saw a problem hand not long ago where the critical suit was ♣ Q2 opposite ♣ AJ, and you could only make the contract if the finesse was wrong!

The auction often reveals enough about the high cards and distribution of the defenders' hands to make the play as good as double dummy for practical purposes. There are also times when, because your contract is on the ambitious side, you simply have to play for the cards to lie in a particular fashion if you are to have any chance. But every so often, an expert will make a play that appears "double dummy" to the opponents and spectators, but is in fact the product of careful analysis and forward planning. Try this problem as South in a contract of four hearts after the bidding shown:

South	West	North	East
1♥	No	2♦	2♠
3♥	No	4♥	No
No	No		

North
♠ A J 8
♥ 10 5 4
♦ Q 10 5 2
♣ K 8 6

West
♠ Q 7
♥ 9
♦ J 8 7 6 3
♣ Q 9 7 4 3

East
♠ K 10 9 4 3
♥ K 7 6
♦ 9 4
♣ A 10 2

South
♠ 6 5 2
♥ A Q J 8 3 2
♦ A K
♣ J 5

The declarer, British expert Geoffrey Mott-Smith, received the lead of the queen of spades from West. He won with the ace and ran the 10 of hearts. He led a low heart to the queen, repeating the finesse, unblocked the ace and king of diamonds, and . . .

Well, you can see all four hands. How would you continue — at double dummy? A count of tricks reveals you have six hearts, the ace of spades and the two top diamonds. But that appears to be all, for you cannot reach the dummy to cash the queen of diamonds, so it appears you will lose two tricks in each black suit. It's your move — South to play and mate in one.

Mott-Smith played a low heart from the South hand, deliberately losing the trick to East's king! East's joy at this unexpected trick was short-lived, for whichever black suit he now led, the dummy would win a trick in the suit and be able to cash the queen of diamonds.

I'm not surprised if the name of Geoffrey Mott-Smith is unfamiliar. He solved this double dummy problem in 1943!

Rugby League World Cup Group One England 20 Australia 16

England give Kangaroos the jump

Paul Fitzpatrick at Wembley

AUSTRALIA must be starting to view Wembley as some sort of charnel-house. Three of their last four appearances here since 1990 have ended in defeat, though the lesson for England is that it is never safe to assume the Kangaroos have been interred.

In 1990 and 1994 they lost to Great Britain in the opening Test matches but went on to win the Ashes. They are still good enough to win the Halifax World Cup and further competition is sure to improve the ball control which let them down badly on Saturday. But they are now under some pressure and perhaps even a little rattled.

It was impossible to watch Australia here and not believe that Bobby Fulton's side would have been improved by the inclusion of Brett Mullins, Laurie Daley or Bradley Clyde to name only three of the Super League players who were overlooked.

It must have crossed Fulton's mind, though in the state of near-civil war which now exists in Australia he would not be at liberty to admit it, that Mullins would have done a better job than the vulnerable Tim Brasher at full-back and that Daley and Clyde must have improved the three-quarter line and pack respectively.

Australia have plenty to think about. England now simply need to keep their minds firmly fixed on the two games ahead and they should go through to the semi-finals as winners of their group. It was a source of satisfaction to Phil Larder, the England coach, that his dressing room was a quiet, reflective place after the game. The players know the celebrations are a long way off.

But what an impressive start they made. England's preparations were disrupted by the withdrawals of Gary Connolly and Martin Offiah, yet by the end of the afternoon, in a compelling and fluctuating contest, they had produced a performance largely beyond criticism.

The great worry for Larder is the lack of intensity in club competition. Wigan, whose players and former players provide the bulk of the team, are beating their opponents far too easily these days and it is difficult to switch from a fairly undemanding level to one that requires total concentration and high physical endeavour for 80 minutes. Yet England achieved their goals admirably.

Their pack, with Andy Farrell superb at loose-forward, lost nothing in comparison with the Australians. Clarke, Betts and Farrell formed a near-flawless back row; Andy Platt departed on weary legs after an hour, having given everything, while Lee Jackson could retain his International Player of the Year award if he produces more of this form at hooker.

Carl Harrison gave way to Chris Joynt after 28 minutes and although the St Helens forward prefers the second row he made the most of his opportunity at prop by scoring England's second try three minutes after the interval, kicking through from short range and getting a fingertip to the ball after Brasher had been left floundering.

The back division still needs some fine-tuning. Shaun Edwards was Geoff Toovey's equal but his tactical kicking was below its usual impeccable standard. Barrie-Jon Mather had a flawed afternoon and Kris Radlinski was occasionally vulnerable on his international debut.

Daryl Powell, the Keighley stand-off, opted for a risk-free policy and generated little creative play. But Powell is utterly trustworthy and, against sides as efficient as Australia, players who do not make mistakes are invaluable.

In the end the costliest errors were made by Australia. Wishart's knock-on led to a scrum from which the magnificent Farrell, four minutes before half-time, went over the line with Toovey and Menzies unable to halt him; Brasher was at fault for Joynt's try soon after the interval and possibly the worst blunder of the afternoon came when Hopoate spilled the ball under a dual England challenge and gifted Robinson a try.

Six minutes from the end Dymock's pass was intercepted by Newlove, who scored England's fourth touch-down and practically put them out of danger.

South Africa 6 Fiji 52

Footloose and running free

Edward Kennedy at Keighley

FIJI were given a standing ovation after this display of power, pace and invention. It is unfortunate that the Batis are in the same group as England and Australia and are unlikely to qualify, because on this showing an appearance in the semi-finals would be well deserved.

The pre-match claim of the South Africa coach Tony Fisher that with the right sort of support his team would be world champions in five years was put in perspective. The Rhinos were swept aside in the second half by Fiji's basketball style of play.

The running of the Fijian second-row Ilie Toga was fearsome. Six times the South Africans aimed their restart kick at him and on each occasion his tackler needed lengthy treatment.

Fiji's half-backs, Save Taga and Noa Nayacakalou, revelled in the space given to them by their forwards. The full-back Waisale Sovatabua also linked to great effect and the centre Filimoni Saru was often in the right place at the right time.

Fiji quickly settled and tries by Sovatabua and the winger Noa Nadruku put them on top after nine minutes. Pierre van Wyk landed three penalties to give hope to the South Africans but on half-time they were destroyed by a slick try. A good run by Joe Dakuitoga paved the way for a neat score by Taga and gave Fiji a 16-6 interval lead.

Within seconds of the resumption a fine move involving Nayacakalou, Marayawa and Sovatabua gave Saru the first of his two tries and opened the floodgates. It then became almost an exhibition as Marayawa, Sagaitu, Naisoro and Sovatabua all scored tries.



Instinctive stuff . . . the Fijians psych themselves up before the game at Keighley PHOTOGRAPH: MICHAEL STEELE

Group Two New Zealand 25 Tonga 24

Kiwis a Ridge too far for Tonga

Paul Fitzpatrick at Wilderspool

A DROPPED goal from Matthew Ridge in injury time spared New Zealand one of the greatest embarrassments of their lives at Warrington.

With seven minutes of normal time left, Tonga led 24-12 and the only thing the Kiwis had got right was the haka. Tonga had given notice of their ability in the 10th minute when Willie Wolfgramm finished off a move that he had instigated.

By half-time, however, the Kiwis seemed to have quelled Tonga's fire and tries came from Hoppe, Kemp and Blackmore in a 15-minute spell.

But in the second half New Zealand, third favourites for the trophy, must have thought they had walked into an ambush in front of Warrington's largest crowd of the season, 8,083.

Taufa scored on the right and five minutes later New Zealand's defence was again caught flat-footed, this time on the left, when Veikoso hurtled on to Duane Mann's low, angled kick.

Amone then landed a penalty when the Kiwis were caught offside; Tony Iro's sloppy pass went to ground and Finau accepted the gift. Amone added the goal points. More depression for the Kiwis followed when Ridge conceded the most careless of penalties when his drop-out from under the posts sailed into touch.

New Zealand needed something exceptional if they were to survive and to their credit they found it. They produced some breathtaking handling movements and tries came from Okesene and Blackmore in the 73rd and 78th minutes. Both were improved by Ridge.

And so to injury time and Ridge's decisive drop-kick, squeezed over with his weaker left foot. A remarkable end to a glorious game.

Wales 28 France 6

Wales suffer Davies blow

Paul Fitzpatrick at Cardiff

AN INJURY to Jonathan Davies took the edge off an encouraging start by Wales to their World Cup challenge at Ninian Park. The Welsh captain suffered mild concussion and was taken to hospital.

His condition was not thought to be serious but his place against Western Samoa on Sunday must be in doubt. It could even mean, if he fulfils his aim to return to rugby union, that he has played his last game of league for his country.

His loss to Wales, the European champions and fourth seeds, needs no emphasising. Important though Davies is, however, he is not indispensable, as the Welsh proved after they lost him just before the hour.

Wales could be in trouble for abusing the substitute regulations. They appeared to use five, one too many, and Greg McCallum, the controller of referees, said that he and the tournament director Maurice Lindsay would review the match.

Iestyn Harris, the young Warrington full-back, was the well-deserved Man of the Match. At 19 he is one of the game's most talented youngsters.

But it was Anthony Sullivan, the St Helens winger, who was the scoring hero of the night. He collected a classy hat-tick, with two tries before the interval and a third soon after it.

A crowd of 10,250 far exceeded the forecasts and gave a crackle to the atmosphere. The Welsh did not betray their followers, two Davies penalties helping them to a 12-0 lead by half-time.

Moriarty was a consistently dangerous runner in the second-row; Gibbs was a threatening centre while Ellis, ever the enthusiast, showed no signs of rustiness in spite of not playing first grade football for six months.

And there was also Harris, mopping up any messes at the back and moving forward eagerly to link with his halves or forwards at every available opportunity. His effortless try in the second half was a vivid illustration of his talent.

The touchdown which ignited the crowd arrived at 25 minutes. Another of Moriarty's thundering runs had been halted just short of the French posts. From the ensuing play the ball was moved left via Hall, Davies, Harris and Bateman and Sullivan found the room to squeeze in at the corner.

Sullivan got his second try after Valero spilled the ball in the tackle. Davies gathered it, fed Harris and from his pass Sullivan again made no mistake.

His third try came soon after the restart. Ellis, Hall and Harris all showed up well in the build-up, and Davies fed Sullivan with the French cover blown.

The game was not yet quite won, however. Torreilles scored close to the posts when he was sent away by Chamorin and in the build-up Davies took the knock off the ball which led to his departure. A stretcher was called for but Davies, groggily, went off under his own steam. But all finished well for Wales. The splendid Harris, with a flick of the hips, left Banquet and Charmorin for dead in midfield and streaked 50 yards for a lovely try. And in the 70th minute Devereux scored forcefully on the right.